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MUSLIM SEPARATISM IN INDIA

In token of affection and gratitude, this little book is dedicated to my uncle, Sheikh Nur Mohammad, whose influence became the starting point of this study.

MUSLIM SEPARATISM IN INDIA

A BRIEF SURVEY
1858—1947

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FOREWORD

HISTORY is to a nation what memory is to an individual. It helps to conserve the fruitful elements of the Past for the benefit of the Future. Life is a continuous process and the direction of its movement is conditioned by experience and foresight—by its failures and successes as well as by its aspirations. Whether therefore the historical process has a cyclical character, as some believe, or it involves the unfolding of ever-fresh possibilities on the human plane, its full significance can only be appreciated in the context of its spatio-temporal record. It follows as a corollary that the utility of history would depend on the extent to which it embodies an objective approach to facts and events.

The creation of Pakistan, founded, as it is, on an ideological rather than a geographical or racial basis, is a unique event in world history. Its roots lie deep in the socio-political soil of the Indian sub-continent. Patient research is needed to unearth the sources from which these roots have derived their life-sustenance during the past centuries. Books written by Western or Indian authors on the genesis of the Partition of India are, by and large, oriented either by occidental prejudices or by an ostrich-like refusal to see the minorities' problem that existed in an acute form in this land of linguistic, racial and cultural diversities. The myth has been sedulously fostered by propagandists of the majority community that Muslim separatism in India owed its inspiration to the time-aged formula of Divide et Impera of alien rulers. This is at best an over-simplification of a complex situation in which narrow Hindu exclusivism in the socio-economic sphere and thinly-veiled militant Hindu expansionism in the political field, played no insignificant part. Competent Muslim historians have been strangely indifferent to the necessity of providing the necessary corrective to this distorted picture, though historiography has been the special metier of Muslim litterateurs in the past. We must, therefore, be grateful to Professor Abdul Hamid who has made a well-documented attempt in this book to present an objective account of the cold and hot war that ended in what was described in Congress circles as the vivisection of the cow-mother. I feel that the treatment of the subject could have been fuller and more detailed if more original source material had been available to the author. So far as it goes, however, it is a vivid and authentic story that he has presented. We must regard it as an earnest of a more exhaustive study from his piquant pen at some later date. Meanwhile he must be given the credit for having blazed the trail for other travellers to follow.

65 Gulberg, Lahore S.A. RAHMAN

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The scope of this book—The Hindus and the British radicals—'Democracy' in the Orient—Sayyid Ahmad Khan.

1

THIS is by no means an ambitious book but it is the first attempt, so far as the author is aware, to present Pakistan as a product of the forces that followed the British occupation of India. (The writing of the text was completed in 1959.) It traces the stages of the movement that led to the Partition of the sub-continent and does not pretend to be a history of India. It is only one facet of a complex subject, its main purpose being to fill some vital gaps in current books on modern Indian history and to make the subject more intelligible than it is to the ordinary reader today. It brings to light some aspects of recent Indian history which are often suppressed or ignored. It is usual to dismiss the subject of Muslim separatism by a simple formula: that Britain's rule in India was a system of heartless exploitation; that she created, magnified, widened and emphasised India's internal differences to her own advantage; that she maintained her supremacy over the sub-continent by a deceitful game of divide and rule; that the Muslims sided with the British and were rewarded with protection and indulgence; that the Hindus were persecuted for struggling to free themselves from foreign oppression, that the demand for a Muslim homeland in the sub-continent came from vested interests and had nothing whatever to do with the welfare of the common man. This over-simplification of the problem has acquired some status by sheer repetition. This book attempts to show that Pakistan owes its existence to a variety of different factors, the most important of these being the Muslim urge for freedom.

Our narrative begins with the year 1858 which marked the failure of a mass uprising against the British in India. The rulers of India characterized the outbreak as an act of treachery against themselves and called it the 'Mutiny'. It continued to be so described throughout British rule. We have adopted the customary appellation without contesting its claim to be called the 'War of Independence' by which name it has now come to be known in India and Pakistan. With the end of the Mutiny, the last vestige of Muslim political supremacy was removed and the Muslim community sank into torpor and degradation. The British blamed the Muslims for instigating the Mutiny and followed a vindictive policy towards them, subjecting them to indiscriminate seizures, confiscations and executions. Dr Hunter, a member of the Civil Service, whose official duties brought him into close touch with the population of Bengal, painted a grim picture of the pitiable plight of the Muslims of this region in 1872: 'A hundred and seventy years ago,' he said, 'it was impossible for a well-born Musalman to become poor; at present it is almost impossible for him to continue rich . . . there is no Government office in which a Muslim could hope for any post above the rank of porter, messenger, filler of inkpots and a mender of pens.'

In the North-Western Provinces, the confiscation of Muslim estates was enforced as the general penalty. The condition of the Muslims was much the same elsewhere.

The advent of the new dispensation found the Muslims wedded to old ways. They were unreconciled to politics and generally opposed to all Western influences, particularly western education. By 1875 the three universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay had turned out six hundred graduates of whom only nineteen were Muslims. Some Muslims argued that no true believer could continue to live under alien domination without earning eternal damnation. The British attitude towards the Muslims underwent a change after 1870 and the Government abandoned its severe policy. But the mere announcement of a 'conciliatory' policy did not produce a change in Muslim fortunes or in the habits of the Civil Services. For the Muslims, struggling hard to catch up with other communities, found it practically impossible to retrieve the lost ground. Those who had planted themselves in positions of vantage could neither be dislodged nor persuaded to share their spoils with Muslims. Consequently, the Indian Muslims, who were an under-privileged group at the beginning of the period under review remained so throughout. They were a strangely inarticulate people in an age of noisy politics. They never had a strong, or even tolerable Press and they made little impression on the outside world. When, eventually they attempted to influence foreign opinion, they found themselves helpless against those who were already in the field. They published nothing significant about themselves. Whatever came from them in print is in Urdu, a language foreign to the Western reader. Urdu sources are insufficient by themselves. They have to be supplemented by, and checked against, the writings of non-Muslims, both Indian and foreign, whose approach to Muslim problems is often highly coloured.

Hindu writings had been flooding foreign markets for a long time—their facile logic captured the interests of the intellectual abroad who was presented only with the Hindu point of view. Hindu publications were good propaganda but often distorted history. This point may well be illustrated with reference to some of the outstanding Indian works on recent history.

2

THE extensively documented, ponderous *History of the Indian National Congress* by Dr Pattabhi Sitarammayya, first published in 1935 and expanded into two volumes in 1946, is a good example of how facts are twisted. This celebrated author was reputed to be well read in history and politics and was a recognized authority on the subject. He knew the inside story of the organization, for he had been a member of the supreme Congress executive for many years and had even reached its highest office. Explaining in this book the damage done to the Hindu position by the constitutional changes of 1909, he observed:

What was egregious was the different franchises set up for the different communities. To become a voter, the Muslim had to pay income tax on

Rs. 3,000 a year, while the non-Muslim had to pay on three lakhs (Rs. 3,00,000) a year. It was enough for a Muslim graduate to have a standing of three years to become a voter, while a non-Muslim was required to have 30 years' standing. Three thousand against three lakhs of income and three years against thirty years of standing.

This is an astounding statement, for it is well known that there was no universal law of franchise under British rule and that qualifications for voters varied from region to region. The purpose of this variation was to strike a just balance between the voting strength of a community and the total strength of its population in a province. But this equilibrium was seldom attained. The number of Muslim voters remained much smaller than that of the Hindu voters even in these provinces where the Muslims were numerically stronger. The conditions for admission to franchise differed from province to province but did not differ from community to community within a province. But that is another story. The scheme of 1909 was also complicated by an attempt on the part of the Government to remove the electoral anomalies arising out of a uniform franchise based partly on ownership of property and partly on university qualifications. The rules framed under the statute required Muslim members of the legislatures to be elected directly and their Hindu compeers to be elected indirectly. One wonders where Dr Sitarammayya found the figures that he has advanced confidently. Probably he relied on rhetorical observations made by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya in his presidential address to the annual session of the Indian National Congress in 1909 to the effect that whereas tax-payers on an income of Rs. 3,000 or more among Muslims and university graduate of five years' standing belonging to that community were entitled to vote directly, the Hindus who paid a hundred times as much by way of income tax and were graduates of thirty years' standing were denied the right of *direct* participation in elections. The deduction is frivolous as well as deceptive. It is also inaccurate inasmuch as university graduates of a certain standing, whether Hindu or Muslim, were invariably enfranchized. No comparison could be fairly drawn between the qqulifications of the voters of two communities because the conditions under which they exercised their right of vote were entirely different. Dr Sitarammayya's generalization is clearly unwarranted.

Another volume, Mr Lal Bahadur's published Ph.D. thesis, *The Muslim League, its History, Activities and Achievements* (Agra, 1954) is a one-sided account extracted from hostile sources. Though the author has appended a long bibliography to his dissertation, his preconceived notions have not been corrected by his reading. He did not even bother to notice where he differed with his authorities, for example Lovet Fraser, the author of *India under Curzon and After*. The Muslim League was found in 1906. The monograph carries its history up to 1947. The narrative virtually becomes, as it should become, one of Indian politics. Even a cursory glance through the book will convince the reader that Mr Bahadur has accepted every bit of information, regardless of its worth, which supports his theories, but has conveniently ignored everything opposed to his thesis. It was surely unnecessary in a book of 360 pages to

devote some hundred pages of journalistic writing to the events between 1940 and 1947. Equally difficult to understand is the decision of the author to omit all reference to the years 1921-7. True, the League was moribund in 1922-3, but no investigator can afford to ignore one of the most crucial periods of the history of the sub-continent. If the writer did not attach any importance to the years in question, he could have justified the omission in a few paragraphs. Although the book has the appearance of a work of research it is clearly partisan.

In the same category we can also include *Mahatma Gandhi* by B.R. Nanda (London, 1958). This is an intensely interesting account of Mahatama Gandhi's life and ideas. The author has done some hard work in digging out facts and measuring the forces that shaped his dynamic theme. But his chapter entitled 'Communal Front' is a caricature of the subject. The writer does not devote a single line to the Hindu Mahasabha, the most influential Hindu organization of the twenties and the most consummate fomenter of Hindu communalism. Though the Muslim League has been made to stand in the dock occasionally, the name of the Hindu Mahasabha does not even occur in the index to the book. Probably Mr Nanda is not alone in this. Generally speaking, Hindu writers are reluctant to expose the Hindu Mahasabha to critical inquiry. The impact of this body on the Congress represents a distressing interlude in the history of the Congress and few professing nationalists would undertake a straightforward narration without feeling small. Another striking omission in the volume is that of the 'Inner Voice', the crotchet by which Gandhi professed to be guided. 'I see no light', used to be his unvarying answer to those with whom he did not agree. In course of time, the Inner Voice became the ruling force in Congress politics and the despair of friends and opponents alike. It became difficult to ascertain Gandhi's sympathies and antipathies on numerous questions of the day. Mr Nanda's reticence on the topic necessarily results in a bright and highly idealized picture of his hero which is different from that of the real man.

Of the same ilk is the collection of the biographical sketches of eminent Indians under the colourful title of *Men and Supermen* (Bombay, 1943). The author, Joachim Alva, has the following observations to make about the Muslim Leader, Mohammad Ali on page 12 of this work:

> Mohammad Ali wrecked his nationalism on the rock of his fanaticism. Eternally haunted by the idea that Muslims were the Masters of India for centuries . . . he foolishly cried out for Muslim hegemony in this enlightened twentieth century. Hence the war for seats and percentages and safeguards to ensure Muslim domination to reduce Hindu majorities to impotent minorities.

Even when the author has decided to place Mohammad Ali alongside, if not in, the galaxy of the supermen of his own choosing, he attributes to him motives entirely foreign to Mohammad Ali. Though Mohammad Ali was undoubtedly concerned about the fate of Muslims in a 'democratic' India, he could see no alternative to majority government. After long years, he evolved a formula of his own, in which politics could make

a healthy start under a constitution in which the population ratios of different communities in each province were reflected in the composition of its legislature. It is possible to quarrel with his diagnosis and disagree with his remedies, criticising his formula on rational grounds, but quite another to present this proposition as an intention to reduce Hindu majorities to helpless minorities.

Finally, the encyclopaedic and in some ways admirable monograph, V.P. Menon's *Transfer of Power* (Calcutta, London and Princeton, 1957), authenticated by the personal knowledge of the writer, abounds in deliberate understatements and ommissions. It ignores all the unseemly and intemperate statements made by the leaders of Hindu India on the eve of the transfer of power, but it finds space for all the artless declarations of the Muslim League leaders to show that it was the other party that really misbehaved. It quotes Mahatma Gandhi's characterization of Pakistan as an 'untruth'. Actually, Gandhi used much stronger language against Pakistan.

3

FROM the eighties of the last century, the Hindu leaders perceived the advantages of finding helpful allies in other lands, particularly in the home of ruling power. They kept in touch with British public opinion through some friendly Britons who had retired from public service in India. The Indian Congress, whose membership was largely Hindu, annually voted a sum of Rs. 60,000 for its political campaign in Britain. In 1892, their British friends decided to utilize these funds to bring out a periodical, *India*, to propagate Congress views. From the enclosure of a letter addressed by Curzon in India to George Hamilton, Secretary of State for India, dated 28 December 1899, and preserved in the India Office Library, London, it appears that these 'old and faithful friends and companions', who had laboured ceaselessly in the Congress cause, chafed at the imperfect pecuniary appreciation of their services. This publicity was strengthened by several Hindu religious missions that were sent from India to participate in religious conferences held on both sides of the Atlantic in the concluding years of the century.

Quite a few English politicians, who accepted the traditional concept of territorial nationality, were made to believe that dissensions between Indian communities were analogous to the harmless party rivalry in their own country. Such people readily responded to the 'nationalist' propaganda and were beguiled by the extravagant praise of the British, their sense of justice and fair play, and of the British nation, which was eulogized as the high court of the British Empire. In the 'friendly' warnings that Congressmen frequently administered to their British friends, they never failed to bring in the subject of Muslim 'ignorance' and Muslim 'fanaticism'. In spite of a rank hatred of Westernization, the Hindu leaders were full of Western phrases and affected a Western outlook. They could expound enlightened ideas in the manner of Gladstone or Morley and knew by heart the catchwords of Western political thought, the maxims and manners of the British courts and the conventions of the British constitution. But the leaders who had sealed

their letters to British sympathizers or spoken to foreign Press correspondents, turned to ferocious deities for blessings and observed the repellent rules of untouchability.

The extent to which the Hindus succeeded with the British left-wingers is brought out in *India: Impressions and Suggestions* by Keir Hardie, the founder of the Independent Labour Party in Britain and still a venerated name in British Labour circles. It was written after a two month's tour of India where he was entertained and surrounded by his Hindu admirers. Accepting the Hindu point of view, he wrote that the Government was showing special favour to the Muslims and that his country would have to pay a heavy price for this folly. He paid a stirring tribute to the 'unequalled' Hindu capacity for learning, sympathized with the sufferings of the Hindu community and denounced Muslim petulance and peevishness. Such bouquets greatly enhanced the prestige of the Congress in foreign eyes and strengthened its credit within the country.

These advantages were denied to the Muslims. This denial was as much due to a bias against their religion as to a general lack of talent to ingratiate themselves with Britons of influence. The widely-held belief that the British always thwarted Hindu purposes and helped Muslim designs is not established by a dispassionate examination of relevant evidence. Actually, the Hindu community derived the maximum advantage from the change of masters and made the largest gains, educational and economic, under the British suzerainty. Its leaders met the new masters more than half way, familiarized themselves with Western ways and made a point of cultivating the friendship of foreigners. It is also the purpose of this book to show that some typically Western concepts, such as nationalism and democracy, lost much of their meaning in their journey from West to East. India learned her first lessons in liberalism from English masters like Bentham, Burke, Macaulay and the Mills. But the mind which absorbed and re-interpreted their ideas was essentially steeped in revivalism. Superficially one can discern a close correspondence between the ideas expressed by some Western thinkers and their Hindu pupils. Both appear to be dedicated to the same causes and to be fighting for the same ends, but Western concepts do not carry their original meanings in the East. Nationalism, for example, is primarily racial and territorial in the West. What passes for nationalism in the East has its origins in religious feeling and political parties often correspond to sectarian alignments. Many Western thinkers see democracy as a form of government catering for the material needs and the spiritual promptings of the people. In the East, on the other hand, 'democracy' is often used, consciously or unconsciously, as a device for absorping minority groups or suppressing rival cultures. The antithesis between an inhuman caste stysem and democracy may long remain unfelt and undiscovered; an acute political consciousness can co-exist with an inert civic conscience. The reasons for the travails of 'democracy' in the Orient are also obvious. Democracy came to the West long after feudalism was dead. It was preceded by a century of individualism and religious scepticism accompanied by the growth of industrialism which gave rise to forms of collective action independent

of racial and sectarian affinities. In the West democracy, with all its limitations, has at least been able to preserve certain unities. In the East it has proved a powerful dissolvent. It has resulted not in unity, but in greater discords. Brought to work in an environment simmering with religious passions, clannish loyalties and feudal traditions, it cannot be legitimately expected to yield the same results it has produced in some of the Western countries.

4

THE story of Muslim politics in the latter half of the nineteenth century has been woven round the personality of Sayyid Ahmad Khan. The procedure may be questioned, but Sayyid Ahmad Khan was undoubtedly the most commanding Indian Muslim figure during the period. It was he who awakened the communal consciousness of the Indian Muslims and propagated the impulses that ultimately broadened into the demand for a separate Muslim homeland in the sub-continent. He was quick to perceive that the British had come to stay in India and entreated his co-religionists to make the necessary adjustments to, and compromises with, the new order. He had to fight the religious conservatism and intellectual stagnation of Muslim society as well as the frigid hauteur of Britons towards Indians. Shocked by the dreadful Muslim suffering of the post-Mutiny days, he dedicated himself to the political rehabilitation and social regeneration of his people. The task of healing the breach between the British and the Muslims was rendered difficult by the intolerance of the ruling classes who were slow to forget the part the Muslims had played in the 1857 uprising and who often believed Islam as the religion of an inherently backward community. Sayyid Ahmad had limited objectives but not a limited vision. He cannot be accused of obsequiousness when preaching loyalty to the British. This seemed to be the only way of saving the Muslims from total submersion. His actions, he used to say, were motivated only by solicitude for the welfare of his community.

obsequious = adj. = excessively willing to serve or obey; servile
obsequiousness = n =

solicitous = adj = ① showing care or concern
② desirous; eager ③ full of anxiety; troubled.

solicitude = n = being solicitous, care, concern etc.

indite = to direct or dictate; to write

SAYYID AHMAD KHAN AND HIS AGE

Th Mutiny—The rulers and the ruled—The Muslims and the State—A visit to Britain—The new education for Muslims—A more rational understanding of religion—A new political creed—Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the Indian National Congress—An Indian nation?—summary and conclusions.

1

SAYYID AHMAD was born in Delhi on 17 October 1817. His father, Mir Muttaqi, was a recluse. Though his family was connected with the 'fort', as the Mughal palace was called, it did not lack contact with the British; General Otchorloney was a family friend and a frequent visitor. The city of Delhi had been administered by the British ever since 1804; its society was decadent but colourful. When Mir Muttaqi's death landed the family in financial difficulties, Sayyid Ahmad, much against the inclination of the family, took service with the East India Company. He served at Agra (1839-41), Mainpuri (1841-2), Fatehpur Sikri (1842-6), Delhi (1846-54) and Bijnour (1854-8). During his nine years' stay at Delhi, he found time to edit a newspaper called *Sayyid-ul-Akhbar*, indite a number of pamphlets on theology, write his monumental *Asar-us-Sanadid*[1] and prepare a collated edition of *Ain-i-Akbari*, the encyclopaedic history of the reign of Akbar. At Bijnour he edited a history of the district, which was lost in the Mutiny. Right up to the Mutiny, Sayyid Ahmad's interests were mainly cultural. He looked backward and not forward. He showed no appreciation of the present or anxiety about the future and there was little promise of his later work.

Sayyid Ahmad was posted at Bijnour when the Mutiny broke out. The prison house in the city was torn open; mutineers pillaged the stocks of grain and sugar, selling the two commodities at the same rate. At grave personal risk, Sayyid Ahmad saved the lives of British officials in distress, and, after an argument with a rebel chief, had them safely escorted to Roorkee. Earlier, at his instance, the contents of the Government treasury, amounting to one and half lakhs of rupees, were thrown into a well to prevent their appropriation by the insurgents. Sayyid Ahmad kept a detailed and day-to-day diary of the course of the Mutiny in the district of Bijnour when he was almost in hourly peril of his life. The diary opens with Sayyid Ahmad's remarks on the responsibility of a historian, which will be read with interest. 'The contents of this book mostly deal with what I saw with my own eyes and did with my own hands. I have taken great pains to ascertain the truth of events and incidents beyond my personal experience. Partial history-writing is a distinctly dishonest undertaking. It damages

the truth and its evil influence works for ever. Thus the sinful responsibility of the historian is eternal.'[2]

He was firmly convinced from the very outset that the British had come to stay, and when a mutinous leader allowed him to continue in his official position, he agreed to do so only as a functionary of the Company government.

Sayyid Ahmad heartily welcomed the return of peace. The assumption of the Company dominions by the Crown directly linked the destinies of India with those of Britain. This he considered to be the luckiest event in the history of the two countries. The British had, he thought, an aptitude for government which the previous administrations, Hindu or Muslim, utterly lacked. These were his words:

After a long period of unmitigated slavery, it was ordained from on high, that the destinies of India should be placed in the hands of an enlightened nation. The Hindu and Muslim governments of the past were stark autocracies, standing neither for the Hindu Dharma nor for Muslim Shariat. They looked upon might as right. The British alone with their love of probity, justice and toleration are fitted to rule over the vast and varied masses of India . . . We cannot expect anything better from Russia, Prussia or any other power.[3]

But he was not altogether unmindful of the faults of the British. In a different context he declared that 'their methods of carrying out their good intentions are open to criticism'. However, Sayyid Ahmad was not passive in his acquiescence to the new order. Events had brought the country within the ambit of European civilization and now her people could work out their salvation and evolve a satisfactory culture in contact with the most advanced of the European peoples. To this end it was vital, he pleaded, to understand the European way of life and the Western mode of thought.

2

IN THE earlier years of his public career Sayyid Ahmad worked hard to bring about a better understanding between the British rulers and their Indian subjects. The first contribution to this end, in order of chronology as well as of importance, was an Urdu pamphlet entitled, *Risala Asbab-i-Baghawat-i-Hind* (The Causes of the Indian Revolt), written in 1858, and translated into English many years later by two of his English friends: it was a factual analysis of the causes of the revolt. With a firm sociological background it criticized the Company rule very strongly and showed that the revolt was an outcome of the frustrations and accumulated wrongs of decades. By its indiscreet acts, the essay argued, the Government had forfeited the trust of the people: its actions always being suspect people accused it of bad faith and assumed that its regulations were calculated to humiliate and degrade them.

The most powerful source of dissatisfaction with the Company rule was the proselytizing activity of the Christian missions. It was widely

believed that the Government would gradually, but none the less surely, convert the whole people to Christianity, that it was surreptitiously developing its plans and that in due course it would take advantage of their ignorance and poverty, and Christianize them easily. Strong colour was lent to this accusation, when in the famine of 1837 a large number of orphans were made over to the missionaries to be brought up as Christians. In 1856, a cleric, named Edmund, issued a letter from the Governor-General's house in Calcutta to the Company's Indian servants of all grades, urging them to ponder over the truths of Christianity, and consummate the process of Indian unity initiated by modern means of transport and communication, by the deeper and more spiritual bonds of the Christian faith. This was interpreted as a general invitation to apostasy and confirmed the suspicion that the Christian missionaries were appointed by the Government and their activities financed out of the public exchequer. High officials contributed liberally to missionary funds and often entered into religious argument with their Indian subordinates, compelling the menials to come to their houses and listen to missionary preachings. Now in India, religious preaching has always been conducted in private, but the Christian evangelists appeared in public, distributed tracts full of insinuations against other religions, and offended their listeners by their language. The missionary schools (made eligible for Government grants-in-aid in 1854) grew fast in numbers, importance and influence. Their curricula included instruction in the doctrines of Christianity. The Government officers inspected these schools frequently and encouraged the study of scriptures by awarding prizes to those who answered their questions in accordance with the Christian doctrine. In village schools Urdu alone was taught while Persian and Arabic were completely excluded. Parents thought that the Government intended their sons to forget all about their own religion, and thus drift into Christianity. The vigorous efforts to promote female education were interpreted as an ill-concealed attack on the time-honoured institution of *purdah*. As a result no one felt certain of being allowed to adhere to his ancestral faith for long.[4]

Common cooking arrangements for prisoners of all denominations were held to militate against caste rules of great antiquity. An Act of 1850 made it criminal to withhold the due share of inheritance from a member of the family renouncing his religion; no one could fail to perceive that the measure was designed to benefit the converts to Christianity. A law of 1856, permitting widows to remarry (and thus conferring an independent status upon women), appeared as a blatant assault upon Hinduism, which had never countenanced the practice.[5]

The rapacity of the money-lending classes and the unusually heavy rates of revenue assessments ruined many families of repute financially and undermined their allegiance to British rule. The use of stamps on legal documents was detested as being a sale or denial of justice. The administrative procedures in some provinces gave arbitrary powers to the presiding officers of law-courts.[6]

The confiscation of rent-free grants during the Company rule had already told heavily upon the peasantry; indigenous industry was

throttled by the competition of cheap machine-made goods imported from Britain; the currency policies of the Company brought disaster on the finances of the country. When the Mutiny broke out, hordes of malcontents took service with the rebel armies on the low wage of six pice, or a seer and a half of grain, per day. Every success of the British arms distressed the populace who longed for the overthrow of British rule as the only way out of their subservience.

The higher officers of the Company loved to be surrounded by sycophants and were notorious for their sensitiveness to criticism and their intolerance of independent opinion. Moreover, they were not primarily concerned with the native people. The extension of the Company's territories and the consequent disbandment of princely armies and dissolution of native courts gave rise to widespread unemployment. Strangely enough, the Government had kept itself isolated from the people, as if it had been the fire and they the dry grass; were the two brought into contact, the latter would be burnt up.[7]

Such in outline was Sayyid Ahmad's analysis of the causes of the Indian Revolt. The pamphlet is a closely reasoned document of considerable historical value, its outspokenness being equalled only by its moderation. Sayyid Ahmad held that the solution to all these difficulties lay in bringing the rulers and the ruled closer together by the admission of Indian members to the legislature to ensure that the laws passed by this body satisfied the needs of the country and were not merely academic. At the same time, he candidly confessed, 'I do not wish to enter into the question as to how the ignorant and uneducated people of Hindustan could be allowed to share in the deliberations of the Legislative Council, or as to how they should be selected to form an assembly like the British Parliament. These are knotty points.'[8]

If Sayyid Ahmad's first and foremost object was to acquaint the British with the Indian mind, his next anxiety was to open the minds of his countrymen to European literature, science and technology. This would help to dispel the great misunderstandings between the two peoples, and the 'maddening recollections' would be gradually forgotten. It was with this end in view that the Scientific Society was founded in 1863 at Ghazipur, where Sayyid Ahmad was posted at the time. It was a social as well as an educational venture, intended to provide a meeting place where Indians and Englishmen could come and talk over subjects of common interest. Its main purpose was to translate standard English works on various subjects into Urdu and use them for educating the people. In his opening address, Sayyid Ahmad explained that the Society would disseminate the knowledge of history, ancient and modern, so that people could profit from the events of the past. The science of agriculture and political economy he listed next in importance to history. 'The knowledge of political economy should dispel such absurd notions that . . . rupees as fast as they are collected are shipped off to England.[9]

The Scientific Society was almost the first learned association in northern India. In order to win popular support for it and publicize the beneficial nature of its aims and objects, Sayyid Ahmad went to Calcutta and made several public appeals on its behalf: the response

was encouraging.

On Sayyid Ahmad's transfer to Aligarh, the assets of the Society were also transferred along with him. Aligarh became the permanent home of the Society and the centre of its manifold literary activities. Its membership increased and included many sympathetic Europeans but the number of its Hindu members was insignificant. The Society was housed in a fine building, employed a corps of translators, owned a press and ran a newspaper, the weekly *Aligarh Institute Gazette* (1866-98) which set the Indian press a fine example of sober and responsible journalism. The motto of this journal was epitomized in the following words, 'Liberty of the Press is a prominent duty of the Government and is a natural right of the subjects.' The very first article printed in it discussed the British Parliament. In the beginning, it was full of news from England and other parts of the world.

Meeting once a month, the Society arranged discourses on law and the natural sciences, and on historical topics of popular interest. Where necessary, scientific experiments were performed before the audiences. The publications of the Society included treatises in Urdu on chemistry physics, light, heat and other scientific subjects, as well as elementary and advanced works on mathematics.

For some years Sayyid Ahmad's zeal for the transfusion of Western sciences into Urdu continued unabated. He even forwarded a detailed scheme for a Vernacular University of Northern India to the Government for consideration. In a letter from London (1869) he said:

> The cause of England's civilization is that all the arts and sciences are in the language of the country . . . Those who are really bent on improving and bettering India must remember that the only way of compassing this is by having the whole of the arts and sciences translated into their own language.[10]

But on maturer reflection he lost faith in the utility of translations as a means of acquiring higher learning and began to insist upon the indispensability of English. In the early eighties, the University of the Panjab was chartered upon a 'somewhat different foundation from that on which the other old universities of India were based' inasmuch as its object (as its princely donors under Government influence desired) was the 'improvement of Oriental learning and the extension of sound vernacular literature, by transfusing into the language of the country the knowledge, literature and sciences of the West.[11] Sayyid Ahmad viewed the whole scheme with distrust. He denounced it in the following terms:

> The only knowledge that can equip us for the struggle of life today is the knowledge of European literature and sciences . . . Vainly do the people of the Punjab expect to master them through the medium of translations. I was the first person in the country to think of it twenty years ago. Not only did I plan but I also carried my plans into practice. I called into existence the Scientific Society, which still endures. We embarked upon an ambitious programme of translations. But experi-

ence has taught us the futility of this device. I am not opposed to people learning through translations . . . I only take exception to basing higher education exclusively on works of translation . . . [in the first place] there is the insuperable difficulty of coining a sound terminology and, secondly, the frontiers of knowledge are being constantly pushed forward by laborious investigations. A work of translation is apt to be out of date before it sees the light of the day.[12]

Sayyid Ahmad's main object in forming the Scientific Society and writing about the Mutiny was to help in bringing about good relations between the rulers and the ruled. He was very keen to achieve a closer understanding of the English character, and to this end he not only visited England but also adopted a European style of living so that he could welcome Englishmen into his home as friends and guests. He was pleased when his English biographer claimed to have known him like a blood-relation and he once said jokingly that he wanted to marry an English wife so that he could mix more freely in English society.

How far did Sayyid Ahmad succeed in promoting good feeling between the Indians and the British? It was quite clear then, as it is now, that his efforts met with no more than limited success. The vast majority of Englishmen resident in India, irrespective of their vocations, behaved like an army of occupation in a subjugated territory. They carried their aloofness to an extreme. Sayyid Ahmad experienced, in common with countless Indians, the disdainful insolence of some of the power-intoxicated bureaucrats at individual and personal levels. One incident bears narration.

An exhibition held at Agra in 1867 was followed by the Governor's durbar. The District Magistrate of Agra ordered Indians and Europeans to be segregated at this ceremonial. A respectable Indian guest at the durbar unwittingly occupied a vacant seat meant for a British official. He was instantly ordered to make room for its 'proper' occupant and find a place for himself among his own people. Sayyid Ahmad felt greatly humiliated and incensed at this vulgar display of colour prejudice and had a sharp exchange with some British officials present there. A Mr Thornhill flew into a rage and shouted at him, 'You did your worst against us in the Mutiny. How do you now expect to be seated on terms of equality with us and our womenfolk?' Sayyid Ahmad left the place in protest; this annoyed his superiors who called upon him to account for his unruly conduct.[13] Nearly ten years later Sayyid Ahmad reminded Englishmen:

For a whole century and more, you gentlemen have lived in the same country; you have breathed the same air; you have drunk the same water; you have lived upon the same crops as have given nourishment to the millions of your fellow Indian subjects; yet the absence of social intercourse, which is implied by the word 'friendship' between the English and the people of this country has been most deplorable.[14]

Towards the end of his life, he went so far as to despair of equality of treatment between the conquerors and the conquered even in the distant future. These apprehensions were aggravated by the compul-

sory retirement of his son, Sayyid Mahmud, from the judgeship of the High Court of Allahabad in 1893. He wrote:

In my opinion the time has not yet come, and perhaps will never come, when our European friends, conquerors of this country, and naturally full of pride of their conquest, will condescend to sit on the same bench with a conquered and naturally hated Indian, who is desirous of performing his duties with equal honour and respect to his high position. If the Indian wants to keep his self-respect as an honest and well-bred gentleman, his life becomes unbearable. On the contrary, if he yields to his European colleague, who, on account of his being a member of the conquering race, regards himself an altogether superior person, or if he acts on certain directions, he can be happy. But if an Indian desires to obey the dictates of his conscience, and even if there is a little blood of his ancestors in his veins, then he cannot perform his duties. It is no secret that the treatment which English people accord to their own countrymen and that which they accord to Indians are as different from one another as black is from white. People might brag and contend that it was otherwise, but the wise alone know the whole truth of the matter.[5]

Writing in 1885, the thoughtful biographer of Sayyid Ahmad commenting on the provoking ways of his countrymen observed, 'the sooner we alter this behaviour of ours the better for the stability of the British rule in India.'[16] But not very many of the British were capable of learning or unlearning anything in this sphere. Expressions of extreme racial arrogance were by no means uncommon from the most exalted ruling personages in the land. Lord Curzon, for instance, declared in his usual pompous style in 1904 that Indians were unequal 'by their environment, heritage and upbringing' to the responsibilities of high office under British rule.

3

Sayyid Ahmad's attempts at effecting an *entente cordiale* between the Muslims and the State on the political plane make interesting reading. His exposition of the causes of the Mutiny was intended to demonstrate that the grievances leading to disaffection were genuine and well-founded. The Muslims did not join the revolt out of sheer perversity; they had an understandable case against the Government, for the rigours of the administrative system bore harshly upon them:

The indiscretions of the authorities were repugnant to all communities but much more so to the Muslims. The reason is obvious. They had occupied an honourable place in the life of the country for centuries past. They are a proud and sensitive people, not interested in the calculations of profit and loss. They will never consent to self-abasement, whatever the temptations held out to them. It is common experience that they will not, what others may, take lying down . . . This is unfortunate. But Muslims are not to blame for it. They are cast that way . . . that is why they rejoiced at the reports of British disasters.[17]

Another circumstance which caused vexation to the Muslims was, continues Sayyid Ahmad, their systematic exclusion from higher administrative ranks, which they had practically monopolized in the past under successive dynasties. They desired this privilege to continue. The institution of competitive examinations made for efficiency in the government departments, but substantial offices came to be filled by the 'low-born', the 'vulgar' and the 'ill-bred', who did not command the respect of the subject race.[18]

Earlier in this pamphlet, Sayyid Ahmad had stated that the Muslims did not join the Mutiny in the spirit of a crusade. Those who raised the standard of *jihad*[19] were neither divines nor ecclesiasts, but merely 'depraved and filthy bacchanals'. The pillage of the treasuries and the cold-blooded murder of hapless victims, regardless of age and sex, were acts of 'gross irreligion'. The few villains who cried 'our religion is in danger' did so from ulterior motives. This was a piece of rascality and no *jihad*. Sayyid Ahmad reverts to this subject again and again, and reiterates his belief that *jihad* is only permissible in a land where Islam is threatened with extinction and the government of the day forbids the practice of the devotional imperatives enjoined by Islam. Even in that situation the Muslims must not try to shake off the burden laid upon them. Others might wield the sword on their behalf. Under the conditions in British India the injunction did not apply. Here is a typical passage:

> Now we Muhammadans of India live in this country with every sort of religious liberty; we discharge the duties of our faith with perfect freedom; we read our *azans* (calls to prayers) as loud as we wish; we can preach our faith on the public roads and thoroughfares as freely as Christian missionaries preach theirs; we fearlessly write and publish works against the Christian faith; and last, though not the least, we make converts of Christians to Islam without fear or prohibition.[20]

In a series of pamphlets under the title *Loyal Muhammadans of India* (of which only three appeared) Sayyid Ahmad tried to give publicity to the 'steadfast Muslim loyalty' to the British in the 1857 rebellion. In an explanatory preface, he deplored the fact that the fair name of the Muslims had been besmirched by 'unconscionable calumny'. Of all classes of people in the country, the Muslims alone were bound by their religion to stand by Christians in the hour of trial and succour them in adversity, the two peoples being held together by indissoluble spiritual ties. Both hallowed the same long line of Prophets; both venerated the same scriptures as divinely revealed. These doctrinal considerations were reinforced by concrete instances based upon 'unimpeachable' evidence to prove that in the 'terrible cyclone' that had swept the country, the Muslims had stood unshaken by the British. Many Muslims in saving the lives of English men, women and children had had their own women and children hacked to pieces by infuriated mobs. These citations were interspersed with a good deal of theology and scriptural quotations to lend weight to his plea. The publication of these pamphlets had to be discontinued in 1861, for want of interest

on the part of those whose heroism they sought to proclaim. Sayyid Ahmad claimed that the Muslims had been on their best behaviour during the Mutiny. But evidently individual acts of bravery and devotion, prompted mostly by personal loyalties, cannot be said to constitute the collective attitude of the community.

Sayyid Ahmad even put forward the astounding proposition that the Muslims were closely allied with the British in the extension of British rule in India. Proposing the health of Mr Blunt, a Member of Parliament, he made the following observations (1884):

Mr Blunt has visited our country and acquainted himself with our community. Our unflinching devotion to the person of the Queen Empress must have impressed him deeply. We Muslims look up to the British to take a benign and sympathetic interest in our aspirations. But this expectation has not been fully met with . . . Our two peoples have never been at cross-purposes. No discords have ever divided us . . . We don't grudge you [the British] your transcendent superiority . . . You have no revenge to wreak upon us . . . [Historically] the Crusades were the bitterest trial of strength between Islam and Christianity. But the English, as a people, had very little to do with them. We ruled this ancient land for centuries. Ours is a departed glory. We hold the memory and cherish it. But we bear the British no malice or ill-will on that account . . . We accept all responsibility for the establishment of the British rule in this country. In this venture the co-operation between us [the British and the Muslims] has been as close and unfailing as between the two blades of a pair of scissors . . . It is erroneous to suggest that the Mussalmans resent the new order. The British came to this land not as foes but as friends. May their rule have a long span of life in India, nay, we wish it eternity, not for the good of the English themselves . . . I do not humour them . . . but for the sake of this country.[21]

Sayyid Ahmad's biographer, Altaf Hussain Hali, avers that the 'Anglo-Muslim collaboration' in this unusual speech probably referred to such incidents as the clandestine deal between Robert Clive and Mir Ja'afar, which facilitated the British conquest of Bengal, the Mughal emperor Shah Alam's flight from Maratha custody to seek asylum with the British, which virtually made him a British subject, and the entry of Hyderabad's Muslim ruler into Wellesley's system of Subsidiary Alliances, which gave a dependable ally to Britain in southern India. It is true that these episodes strengthened the striking power of British arms in some of the most critical phases in Imperial history, but it may be doubted if Mir Ja'afar, Shah Alam or the Prince of Hyderabad ever consciously cast themselves for the role of 'empire builders' which Sayyid Ahmad seems to impute to them.

Sayyid Ahmad set his face sternly against the extra-territorial sympathies of the Indian Muslims, which would tend adversely to affect their relations with the government of the day. Happily for him, the relations between Britain and Turkey were quite friendly up to 1878 and did not confront him with the problem of conflicting loyalties. But after 1878, the two began to drift apart and when he had to take

sides, he did so unambiguously: 'We owe no allegiance to Sultan Abdul Hamid. He wields no authority over us. He is a Muslim potentate and we rejoice at his good luck and grieve over his misfortunes. But he is not our Caliph. His spiritual suzerainty is limited to the Muslims living within his dominions.'[22]

In 1897, Turkey was involved in a 'ridiculous war' with Greece. In this a Turkish General named Edhem Pasha defeated the Greeks heavily. The Turkish victory thrilled the Indian Muslims, who showered congratulations on the Porte. It was widely believed however, that Britain sympathized with the other side. Consequently, Sayyid Ahmad struck a cautious note:

> We are not aware of the British attitude towards the Greco-Turkish question. It seems unbelievable that our protector should be at cross-purposes with Turkey . . . But even if this be true, we are bound by our faith to bear true allegiance to our rulers and should pray God for smooth and cordial relations between Britain and the Muslim states like Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey.[23]

He went on to characterize the congratulatory messages as 'undignified and unbecoming'. 'It is deplorable', he wrote, 'that Muslims should have done all this without the prior consent and approval of their Government . . . In political matters affecting foreign princes we must not act independently of our rulers. Law and religion alike demand our total subservience to their will.' He even reproached his jubilant co-religionists for 'ingratitude' and recalled that twice during the century, in 1856 and 1878, Britain had saved the Turks from utter extinction. Why did they not vote thanks to France and England then?

4

In 1869, Sayyid Ahmad accompanied his son, Sayyid Mahmud, to England. En route he was impressed by the industrial, cultural and economic progress of the West and was overawed by what he came across in England.

'The politeness, knowledge, good faith, cleanliness, skilled workmanship and thoroughness' of the English made a lasting impression on him. He attributed these qualities to 'education and civilization', and came to the conclusion that 'all good things, spiritual and worldly, which should be found in a man, have been bestowed by the Almighty on Europe, and especially on England.' Overwhelmed by the superiority of the English, he pointedly declared in the same letter:

> Without flattering the English, I can truly say that the natives of India, high and low, merchants and petty shop-keepers, educated and illiterate, when contrasted with the English in education, manners, uprightness, are as like them as a dirty animal is to an able and handsome man. What I have seen and seen daily, is utterly beyond the imagination of a native of India. If any of my countrymen do not believe what I say, you may certainly put them down as frogs and fishes.[24]

'Greater praise', observes Jawaharlal Nehru, 'no man could give to the British and to Europe, and it is obvious that he was tremendously impressed.' But the repeated use of irritating metaphors aroused the resentment of his readers and the journal of the Scientific Society which regularly featured the narratives of his travel had to suspend publication.

While in England, Sayyid Ahmad paid a visit to the University of Cambridge and studied its working at first hand. He was struck not only with the quality and variety of formal instruction imparted to scholars, but also with the valuable training given them in the art of 'civilized living'. His stay in England was a remarkable piece of self-education, which broadened his outlook and gave him fresh ideas and new hopes. He came back with a firm resolve to uproot the social evils prevalent among the Muslims, to disseminate 'European literature and sciences' among them and to break down the social barriers that separated them from their rulers.

5

To HIS own generation Sayyid Ahmad Khan was primarily an educationist. It is remarkable that being himself uneducated in English, he became the torch-bearer of English education in Muslim India. He felt disgusted with the prevalent system of Muslim education which was based only on renowned Persian and Arabic classics and excluded modern sciences. He wrote:

> The old Mohammadan books and the tone of their writings do not teach the followers of Islam independence of thought, perspicuity and simplicity, nor do they enable them to arrive at the truth of matters in general; on the contrary, they deceive and teach men to veil their meaning, to embellish their speech with fine words, to describe things wrongly and in irrelevant terms, to flatter with false praise, to live in a state of bondage, to puff themselves up with pride, haughtiness and self-conceit, to speak with exaggeration, to leave the history of the past uncertain, and to relate facts like tales and stories . . . All these things are quite unsuited to the present age and to the spirit of the time, and thus instead of doing any good they do much harm to the Mohammadans.[25]

And again:

> With the exception of the sciences of Theology and jurisprudence . . . all other sciences that existed among the Mohammadans were utterly useless and of no practical importance. Some of them were founded on wrong, and others on imperfect principles.[26]

> The greater portion of the Greek philosophy, of which Mohammadan scholars were proud, and similarly many other sciences reputed to be 267 in number were of no real use to the human race.[27]

Western education had made its way into the sub-continent in the wake

of the Christian missionaries whose activities were, in the first instance, confined to urban Bengal. In the early days of British rule, some of the Company officials had encouraged the scientific study of the old learning of the Hindus and the Muslims. But the experiment was not pursued and in 1835 the new education was substituted for the old. In this system, which had its own shortcomings, instruction was given in European history, Western philosophy and natural sciences, using the English language as the medium of instruction. The Muslim community, however, on the whole shunned the centres of new learning.

Sayyid Ahmad blamed the new education for its bureaucratic administration, overloaded curriculum, uniformity which failed to recognize individual differences, and for its paucity of teachers, a faulty system of examinations, rigid rules of promotion, and superficial teaching. He argued that Western education remained imperfect to the end as it involved many years' laborious effort in mastering a foreign tongue. 'For more than forty or fifty years the Government has been exerting itself by every possible means to educate the people of this country . . . and no one [through the education so imparted] ever became a great philosopher or a renowned and distinguished author.[28]

His detailed charge-sheet against foreign education will be found in the report of the *Committee for the Better Diffusion and Advancement of Learning among the Mohammadans of India*, sponsored by himself and consisting of his loyal lieutenants. He guided its deliberations and shaped its conclusions. Consequently, the record of its proceedings bears a profound impress of his convictions. This committee painfully recognized the fact that the proportion of Muslim pupils receiving instruction in government schools and colleges was much less than what was warranted by their population figures and that Muslim parents were reluctant to send their children to these institutions because their curriculum did not include religious instruction. They were further of the opinion that the Muslims should not expect the Government to supply this want. An appropriate system of education to cater for the special needs of the community should be devised by, and its management vested in, the Muslims themselves. Of course, religious instruction would be given its proper place in this arrangement; indeed instruction in religion was indispensable since Western education invariably induced disbelief. Sayyid Ahmad told the Committee that he had yet to set his eyes upon an educated young man bearing respect for his religion.

The absence of religious education was just one of the reasons that kept the Muslims away from schools. A host of other prejudices, some legitimate and some otherwise, worked in the same direction and with the same results. The following opinions, for instance, were current at the time: the study of English was forbidden to the faithful, Muslim teachers and scholars were prevented from attending to their devotional duties, the schools were staffed almost entirely by non-Muslims whose severity towards Muslim pupils made matters worse. Government schools corrupted the manners and morals of the pupils, purely secular education was distasteful to Muslims as it ran counter to their national habits and customs, boys were made to read books containing scornful references to their religion and holy places, the mode of education was

lifeless and insipid, it brought no material gain to its recipients, the pupils despised the study of impious sciences on conscientious grounds.[29]

After an exhaustive examination of the state-administered education, from the Muslim point of view, Sayyid Ahmad's committee emphasized the urgency of dissociating the State from education on the ground that the existing connexion between the two was the source of almost all the evils recounted above. It was preposterous to saddle the Government with the responsibility for educating the people; its interference should be restricted to superintendence.

The Committee, which looked upon education as the process of fitting the individual for the business of life, observed that 'education cannot always be one and the same, nor is it possible that any large community should have only one particular end in view, the different classes constituting a large community having always different objects and pursuits.' The flexibility and adjustability implied in this view is necessarily absent from a formal, uniform and departmentalized system where the state accepts liability for educating the masses.

At this stage it may well be asked why this form of education which antagonized the Muslims was willingly accepted by their Hindu compatriots. Dr Hunter answers that the pliant and adaptable Hindu was not agitated by the scruples which had tormented the Muslim. Under Muslim supremacy, government employment depended upon a knowledge of Persian, and the Hindu acquired Persian; under the British, it depended upon familiarity with English, and he learnt English. His conception of religion was radically different from that of his Muslim neighbour. 'Instead of an indivisible and regular system which occupies the whole extent of the believing mind', the Hindu religion is 'composed of a thousand loose parts, and the servant of the gods was at liberty to define the degree and measure of his religious faith.' The Muslims had a way of life to preserve. No wonder, therefore, that they loathed, spurned and resisted a system which made 'no concession to their prejudices; made no provision for what they esteemed their necessities; which was in its nature unavoidably antagonistic to their interests, and at variance with all their social traditions.'[30] That is why Sayyid Ahmad's committee implored the state to divest itself of its educational and instructional functions. It was in this context that Sayyid Ahmad told the Education Commission of 1882, that 'the use of the word *ourselves* in any national sense, with reference to the people of India, was out of place'.[31]

From what he had seen in England, Sayyid Ahmad concluded that the true function of education was not merely to impart book-learning; it was essentially a process of dispassionate thinking and character-building. He planned and established in 1877 an educational institution on the pattern of an English Public School which was located at Aligarh and was called the Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College (M.A.O. College). The aims of this institution were stated by its founders in a well-worded address presented to Governor-General Lytton on the occasion. These were 'to reconcile Oriental learning with Western literature and science, to inspire in the dreamy mind of the people of the East the practical energy which belongs to those of the

West.' It went on to extol the British rule in India as the most 'wonderful phenomenon' of all history, since its main business was to promote the well-being of a vast subject race by 'establishing peace, by introducing the comforts of life which modern civilisation had bestowed upon mankind . . .' The College would ' . . make these facts clear to the minds of our countrymen; to educate them so that they may be able to appreciate these blessings; to dispel those illusory traditions of the the past which have hindered our progress' and also 'to make the Mussalmans of India worthy and useful subjects of the British Crown; to inspire in them that loyalty which springs, not from servile submission to foreign rule, but from genuine appreciation of the blessings of good government.'[32] Thus, education at Aligarh was meant to evolve a new political consciousness among the Muslims and to discover a meeting ground between Islam and the West.

In a number of years, the College grew into a cluster of magnificent buildings, surrounded by extensive playgrounds and spacious lawns. From its residential system, there flowed a continuous stream of rich, buoyant and vigorous corporate life. The College laid great emphasis on sports and also taught its pupils the values of punctuality, discipline and obedience. In their different ways, the College Union, the Duty Society and the riding school all provided valuable training. Sayyid Ahmad was convinced that British educationists alone were fitted to run the institution in consonance with his ideals. The rules of the College framed by himself made it obligatory for the management to engage at least four European professors on the teaching staff, in addition to a European headmaster for the school. In practice the 'European' staff consisted almost entirely of Englishmen. Some of Sayyid Ahmad's friends strongly criticized the fat salaries allowed to the 'foreigners', but, on the whole, the money seems to have been well spent. These employees identified themselves with the institution and entered into its life with zest. The students formed valuable contacts with them on the playing field, in the common room and at the debating societies and other functions.

Up to 1889, the College had been run practically single-handed by Sayyid Ahmad in the name of the College Fund Committee and his authority was not hampered by any formal regulations. As years went by, he became anxious to organize College affairs more thoroughly. His plan as he himself said was to give the College a 'strong constitution'. Accordingly, he prepared a detailed code, popularly known as the 'trustees' bill', the main object of which was to steer the College through some foreseen difficulties. One was the fear that upon Sayyid Ahmad's death the management of the institution should devolve upon Maulavi Sami Ullah Khan. Maulavi Sami Ullah Khan (d. 1908) was almost the co-founder of the College. But for his drive and earnestness its establishment would have been long delayed. His reputation for piety and orthodoxy contributed a great deal to the success of the institution in its earlier days. But the Maulavi was *persona non grata* with the British serving in the College, for he had long advocated the complete 'nationalization' of the staff; his succession would naturally jeopardize the security of their tenure. Consequently, the European professors

prevailed upon Sayyid Ahmad to provide against that contingency. High Government officials were said to have hinted that the continuance of the state grant-in-aid would depend upon the solution of this difficulty to the satisfaction of the European staff. Sayyid Ahmad had always looked upon the role of these gentlemen as integral to his educational scheme and he had a very high opinion of their capacities, academic and executive. In fact they were a valuable link between the West and the East and between the Government and the Muslims. If they were told to go, his life work would be undone. If he could help it, he would not allow that to happen even after he had been laid in his grave. The life secretaryship of Sayyid Ahmad was duly provided for in the 'bill', but the draft contained two highly contentious provisions. One created the office of joint secretary which appeared to be innocuous. But the same provision nominated Sayyid Mahmud to this office which was by no means so innocuous. The 'bill' further required the joint secretary to succeed the secretary on the latter's death. Maulavi Sami Ullah Khan, who had a considerable following in the counsels of the College, was outraged by the unseemly procedure. In the acrimonious correspondence that followed, both parties freely imputed unworthy motives to each other. Sayyid Ahmad would not budge by a hair's breadth from the position he had taken up, threatening to withdraw altogether from the management and let the institution perish, if the trustees failed to pass the bill as he had shaped it. He even challenged Maulavi Sami Ullah Khan to a duel. The virulence of the dispute is unprecedented in the annals of the College. The bill was ultimately passed and as a result Maulavi Sami Ullah Khan and his supporters severed their association with the College—a breach that was never mended. The meeting of the College Fund Committee which finally passed this measure was boycotted by Maulavi Sami Ullah Khan and his friends.

The passage of this 'bill' seriously affected the finances of the College: the flow of subscriptions decreased and the number of students on the roll diminished. Moreover growing laxity in administration led directly to a ruinous embezzlement in 1895, which gave Sayyid Ahmad the shock of his life. Silent and grief-stricken, he sat listlessly for hours every day resting his head on his hand. The loss undermined public confidence and gave an excuse to the critics. The salaries of the staff were not regularly paid; the future appeared highly uncertain and consequently, many professors left the College.

Towards the end of his life, Sayyid Ahmad managed the College very much like a private estate, which made his fellow-workers uneasy, though they held their tongues. Those who summoned enough courage to argue with him were summarily snubbed into silence. The system of nominations to the College Fund Committee (later, the Council of Trustees) stifled all initiative and independence of opinion. In spite of the fact that a trustee held office for life and was irremovable, this eagerly sought-after honour was dispensed among safe mediocrities and moneyed nonentities who were expected to make handsome contributions to the funds of the institution without bothering about its affairs. An overwhelming majority of the seventy trustees hailed

from the Punjab and the North Western Provinces. Indeed it was not uncommon for a single family to obtain a plurality of seats on this influential body.

In January 1897, Sayyid Ahmad added twenty-one names to the roll of the trustees by virtue of his emergency powers as Secretary under the statute, and informed the councillors accordingly. No emergency could be established. The proceeding amounted to 'packing' and was, therefore, unconstitutional. Old comrades discerned some hidden hand behind all this and were perturbed at the drift of events. Three pillars of the Aligarh educational movement, M. Mehdi Ali,[33] Mushtaq Hussain[34] and Altaf Hussain Hali[35], who had worked in closest association with Sayyid Ahmad and whose enthusiasm for the welfare of the College remained unaffected by their personal differences with the leader, decided to address a signed appeal to the community to revoke the trust reposed in Sayyid Ahmad and prevent the undoing of his life work. But Sayyid Ahmad's death in March 1898 rendered this drastic step unnecessary.

6

WITH THE founder's removal from the stage, the College entered upon the most critical phase of its life. The administration was in a state of chaos. Some of its regulations were highly ambiguous; others were positively harmful. Crushed under the weight of a heavy debt, it was heading for bankruptcy. The Council of Trustees was divided into irreconcilable cabals. The Principal and the European professors were undisciplined to a degree and were resentful of the slightest abridgement of their prerogatives. Government support for their inflated claims complicated matters still further. Sayyid Mahmud, the equilibrium of whose brilliant mind was now rendered precarious by years of intemperance, succeeded to this unenviable charge under the rule previously noticed. But he had to be deposed from the secretaryship in favour of Mehdi Ali within a year.

Mehdi Ali was a seasoned administrator, a skilful negotiator and an adroit politician. But these excellent qualities were more than counterbalanced by a pronounced weakness in dealing with men. The character of the institution was largely determined, not so much by the original ideals of Sayyid Ahmad as by the personalities of its principals. For that reason, Mr Beck and his successor deserve more than passing notice.

Mr Beck joined the College in 1883 and remained in office till his death in 1899. He was essentially a politician; educational and academic matters did not occupy him seriously. He won Sayyid Ahmad's gratitude by discouraging the game of cricket during prayer hours and enforcing attendance at the *jamaat* (congregational prayer). Not infrequently, he turned his uncurbed authority against Sayyid Ahmad's closest friends. The 'trustees' bill had been drafted, it is said, in accordance with his wishes. Forgetful of his duties to the institution, he freely exploited the factionalism and intrigue among the trustees, asking for opinions on the merits of particular decisions, proffering unsolicited advice and directing votes in divisions. He played an almost deci-

sive part in engineering the events which culminated in Sayyid Mahmud's removal from the stewardship of the College.

The decision in 1894 to adopt the Turkish dress as College uniform was made in Mr Beck's absence from the country. On coming back to Aligarh, he did not appear to be very happy about the change, but kept quiet over it. After some time and, in all probability, to discourage the wearing of this uniform, he ordered the attendance of students of the compulsory military drill classes in ridiculous uniforms of fine coloured silks. The students murmured but obeyed. Ultimately the matter was taken to Sayyid Ahmad, who personally intervened to have this distasteful regulation rescinded. The jubilant students marked the occasion by tearing their silken uniforms into curtains and handkerchiefs.

Mr Beck enjoyed leading a political life. In contemporary newspaper articles, he is described as a leader and benefactor of the Muslim community. He treated his job as a diplomatic assignment and once declared that the real purpose of the College was to forge an Anglo-Muslim alliance. On Sayyid Ahmad's death, he asked for a public meeting to be convened under the presidency of the District Magistrate to assure the Government of the continued loyalty of the community to the political ideals of the departed leader. He made persistent efforts to get himself appointed life-principal of the College; this might have become an issue but for his premature death at Simla in 1899. During his term of office, he abolished the chair of Sanskrit. Sportsmen and athletes basked in the sunshine of his favour and were much fussed about by the *alma mater*, while the intellectual type of student was barely tolerated. In fact the suspicions of the authorities easily alighted on this class. M. Mohammad Ali, one of the finest products of Aligarh was respected in his student days, not for his uncommon talent, but entirely for his being the younger brother of the doughty cricket captain, Shaukat Ali. Mr Beck declared openly that the Indian cricketer Ranji, deserved a far more honourable place in society than the politician and patriot, D.B. Nauroji. An ex-student of the College deeply soaked in this tradition signed himself 'healthy barbarian' in one of his contributions to the Press. On Mr Beck's death, the obituary note in the London *Times* lamented the passing away of an empire-builder in a distant land, who had died at his post.[36]

Beck's successor, Mr (later Sir Theodore) Morison was a genuine educator. His tenure of office is memorable in the history of the College for many reforms, improvements and expansions in the academic sphere. Mrs Morison held a small class in polite letter-writing at her residence, which was restricted to the favourite pupils of her husband. Another curious feature of the Morison regime was a club without a name, without rules and without formal organization, that met at the Principal's house, at regular intervals, to transact business of which its privileged members had no previous notice. Less ambitious than his predecessor, politically Morison was of the same complexion. The Government heaped continuous honours upon him. Governor Anthony MacDonnel, who never cared to conceal his prejudice against the Muslims, communicated his angry rebukes to the Secretary of the College though him. The Viceroy, Curzon, nominated him a member

of the Imperial Legislative Council to pilot his favourite Universities measure of 1904. Finally, he was knighted. The cumulative effect of these distinctions was considerable and he looked like a British resident accredited to the court of an Indian Prince.

While the college apparently seemed to be flourishing under Mr Morison, relations between teacher and pupil, however, were deteriorating, the students were becoming undisciplined and the European staff and the college directorate were no longer so friendly to each other. When some of the local trustees questioned the Principal's competence to spend money out of the College funds without proper authority, as was done in certain instances, Morison fretted and fumed and clenched his fist at these 'disloyal' critics. He confided to the late Sir Abdul Qadir that every year he used to destroy hundreds of applications for admission to the College to keep down the numbers without the knowledge, and against the wishes, of the management.[37] When the Secretary would not allow students to attend a Bible class run by a young Christian evangelist at her house, he stopped students from visiting his residence. A crisis was reached when Morison attempted to secure the headship of the College for his colleague Mr Corna after his own retirement, and met with determined resistance. Mr Corna was outspoken and lacked balance and judgement and was reported to have informed his classes that while Beck loved the College, Morison only professed affection for it; he (Corna) himself loathed it positively. To ensure Corna's succession, Morison tried to eliminate the other candidates by pointedly telling them that they would not prove equal to the charge. The Secretary, Mehdi Ali, had reluctantly agreed to Corna's succession, but other trustees were adamant and stood their ground. Altaf Hussain Hali pointed out the danger inherent in creating a precedent by allowing a retiring Principal to nominate his successor. In complete disregard of Sayyid Ahmad's own ideas and plans, Morison seriously applied himself to a scheme designed to confine Aligarh to the teaching of Arabic, Persian, Theology, Muslim jurisprudence and allied subjects, to the complete exclusion of scientific and technical studies. Its prompt and unanimous rejection by the trustees added considerably to his frustrations.

In 1906, the Government showed a curious concern for the teaching of Arabic, which was undoubtedly poor, by prevailing upon the Council of Trustees to appoint a European Orientalist to the chair of Arabic to improve the teaching of this language, and by agreeing to pay his salary out of public funds.

During Sayyid Ahmad's lifetime, the Ulema kept away from the institution, but Mehdi Ali adopted a conciliatory attitude towards them. The pious Mushtaq Hussain brought them into its inner counsels and paid greater attention to students' regularity at prayers and other religious observances. Every Friday he was seen solemnly waiting at the gate of the College mosque to receive those who came to offer the appointed prayers. Many students ingratiated themselves with him merely by putting in a regular appearance at the congregations. He also banned the students' dramatic club as, in his opinion, its activities would offend against the canons of the *shariat*.

The earliest opposition to Aligarh education was voiced by the ecclesiasts who branded every kind of aid to the College as irredeemable heresy; they said that the College would disseminate false doctrines, teach its pupils to believe that the earth revolves round its axis, to disbelieve the material existence of the heavens and reduce the five daily prayers to three. They even alleged that its inmates were already compelled to take prohibited foods. Parents received unsigned letters informing them that, on a certain date, an earthquake had razed the College buildings to the ground and that their boys lay buried under its debris. But besides this ill-informed and irrational antagonism, there also existed a more cautious and responsible opposition (never voluminous) which was reflected in the attitude of those who took no exception to Western education as such but discountenanced Aligarh education solely on account of Sayyid Ahmad's heterodoxy.

A section of Anglo-Indian newspapers started a virulent campaign against the very idea of a Muslim College for Western education. They published articles against the College under such headlines as: 'The Muslims are a haughty and arrogant race', 'The proposed College will disseminate the doctrines of *jihad*', 'The Muslims will sew a silken purse out of bristles'. The *Pioneer* of Allahabad carried an article entitled 'Sayyid Ahmad and the College' which contained the following passage:

> [With such plans in his head, Sayyid Ahmad] looks just like a huge dog facing a mirror, grimly watching its own reflection, attacking its imaginary rival in a fit of fury, smashing the mirror into pieces and hurting itself fatally. This is how the Sayyid is going to end himself.'[38]

The M.A.O. College admitted Hindu students but they were exempt from religious instruction. Its boarding house was managed by a committee of twenty-five including four Hindus. So long as this committee endured, Hindus invariably sat on it and Hindu susceptibilities were respected. Cow-slaughter was forbidden within the College precincts and beef was not allowed to be served.

From the very beginning the founders of the College made liberal provision for stipends and scholarships to help needy students. But good care was taken to see that financial aid did not partake of the character of charity or otherwise injure the self-esteem of its recipients. Disbursements were made individually and in private and this wholesome tradition is still respected in Aligarh.

This brief account of the College would suggest that the institution did not quite develop on the lines laid down by the founder. The role of English professors was, at times, unfortunate, although they included some outstanding men of letters like Arnold and Raleigh. Their ascendency was not tamely acknowledged by all friends of the College. Opposition, open or subdued, was always there. The College together with the Mohammadan Educational Conference, founded by Sayyid Ahmad in 1886, provided the first All-India platform to the Muslims of the sub-continent and thus became the nursery of ideas that led to Pakistan.

Sayyid Ahmad's numerous and far-reaching excursions into the domain of religion were actuated almost entirely by the compelling political

exigencies of the times. His early education, which was neither sound nor thorough, had included the rudiments of Muslim Law and Theology. In his youth he had written a number of pamphlets on the various aspects of religion. But he lived long enought to recant most of the views expressed therein. His knowledge of Arabic, the scriptural language of Islam, remained imperfect to the end and his contentious religious research was made possible only by the assistance of Arabic scholars.

Islam, its history and institutions, have generally fared badly at the hands of European critics. In Sayyid Ahmad's opinion, this ill-informed criticism had a direct and adverse bearing on the political fortunes of the Muslims of India. A vilified faith would inevitably bring its votaries into contempt. Accordingly, he informed the West that its version of Islam was a gross distortion. At the same time, he told his own people that the Islam practised by them was a caricature of the creed, and a stupid glorification of form at the expense of its spirit. He argued that there was a strong affinity between Islam and Christianity, and set out to establish this essential kinship with the object of bringing about a *rapprochement* between the Christian government and its Muslim subjects. The task was by no means easy and no Muslim had ever attempted it before. But Sayyid Ahmad took it up in earnest, studied Hebrew with a Jew and produced a bilingual commentary of the Bible entitled *Tabyin-ul-Kalam*.

He approached the two faiths as a student of comparative religion and attempted to reconcile their doctrinal disagreements. He questioned the popular Muslim suspicion regarding the authenticity of the Biblical text and supported the teachings of the Gospels by copious references to the Quran and the Muslim Traditions. He underlined their similarities and emphasized their common differences with other faiths. Both, he pointed out, believed in the divinity of the apostolic office; faith in revelation was integral to both. Sayyid Ahmad argued that the Hebrew scriptures were extant in the Prophet's day and that the Muslim divines of the past had unreservedly accepted their purity. These had no more been tampered with than the verses of the Quran or the Traditions of the Prophet. The inaccuracies creeping into the translations did not impair the integrity of the original text. Thus Sayyid Ahmad sought to dispel Muslim scepticism about the reliability of the Bibical text and fought Christian prejudice by asserting that 'true' Christianity was synonymous with 'true' Islam. The English version of *Tabyin-ul-Kalam* is given in parallel vertical columns opposite the Urdu original on every page. Its subject matter is too abstruse and tedious to have popular appeal, yet it is a valuable study of comparative religion, remarkable for its tolerant tone. Its theology admits of the supernatural, which Sayyid Ahmad denied completely in his later works.

Sayyid Ahmad also wrote a pamphlet to show that Islam did not forbid Muslims and Christians dining together, provided no wines and forbidden foods were served. This irrational inhibition, he argued, had been borrowed from Hindu society. For this 'innovation', he was promptly dubbed a Christian by an irate theologian.

The Quran speaks of Christians as *nasara* and the Muslims followed

the Quranic usage but some British officials construed it as a term of contempt. In the Mutiny, a Muslim was hanged at Cawnpore for this lapse. In a small tract, Sayyid Ahmad explained that the term was in no sense opprobrious, as it had nothing to do with Nazareth, the birth-place of Jesus, but was, on the contrary, derived from the Arabic word *nasr* (meaning 'help'), and Muslims, according to the Quranic injunction, could rightfully expect all help and brotherliness from Christians.

For obvious reasons, Sayyid Ahmad wrote extensively on *jihad*. His defence of this doctrine is voluminous and laboured and its tone is one of unrelieved apology throughout. In the prevalent political context in which the rulers regarded the Muslims as a herd of rebels the underlying import of the following passage in his commentary on the Quran will be evident:

> Islam does not countenance treachery and rebellion. It enjoins upon Muslims the obligations of obedience and fidelity to their protectors and the faithful execution of contracts entered into with non-believers. It categorically forbids conversions at the point of the sword. Nobody is to be forced into the pale of Islam. The sword may be wielded for certain legitimate ends: in the first place, to save Islam from extirpation, and secondly, where Muslims *qua* Muslims are denied the security of person and belongings and are forbidden the ministrations and observances of their faith. Even in the latter situation Muslims are not to mutiny. They must suffer the tyranny patiently or withdraw from the land. But independent neighbours or friendly peoples outside the jurisdiction of the tyrannical state may fight on behalf of the persecuted Muslims. But the insurrection must not be tainted with ulterior motives. Otherwise it loses its holy character.[39]

Sayyid Ahmad quoted times without number the authority of the Prophet to prove that 'loyalty to the powers that be was ordained of God'. 'Obey him who bears rule over you, even if he be a negro and a bondsman', runs a well-known Tradition. The Prophet who had himself desisted from warfare, advised a section of his persecuted Meccan followers to seek sanctuary in the Christian principality of Abyssinia in the early days of Islam.

The essence of *jihad* is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Sayyid Ahmad contrasts this with Christian humility and Hindu *ahimsa*, and dismisses them as theoretical and unworkable. The wars fought by the Prophet of Islam were forced upon him and were entirely defensive. Subsequent Muslim history is replete with wars of aggression. But the doctrines of Islam, continued Sayyid Ahmad, cannot be blamed for the misdeeds of its adherents any more than Christianity can be held to answer for the massacre of St Bartholomew's Day. Muslim iconoclasm and vandalism have been given disproportionate space in the pages of history, but the large-hearted tolerance, security and protection enjoyed by numerous creeds under Muslim rule is often overlooked.[40]

The Life of Mohammad by Sir William Muir, first published in 1861 in four volumes, led a powerful attack on the Prophet of Islam and his teaching. In preparing this work, Sir William had made an intensive

study of the writings of the Muslim historiographers who provided him with some of his most plausible arguments against the religion and its founder. He cited Muslim history to bring out the inherent contradiction between Islam and civilized living and concluded that the backwardness of the Muslim world was directly traceable to the faith it professed. Sayyid Ahmad examined this thesis in his rejoinder published in London, nine years later, *A Series of Essays on the Life of Mohammad and Subjects Subsidiary Thereto*. He showed that Muir had leaned heavily upon Traditions of dubious veracity and altogether ignored the well-understood Muslim criteria of evaluating the various sources of history. Sayyid Ahmad justified in a lengthy discourse the bitterly decried institutions of Islam, like polygamy, divorce and slavery. He combated Muir's dictum that Islam was intolerant of dissent, affirmed that it maintained a high standard of individual and social conduct and reminded the critics that the various phases of the history of Christendom were full of devastations, intrigue and assassinations, 'all on the score of theological argument'. Originally written in Urdu, these essays were translated into English by Sayyid Mahmud, though this does not seem to have been generally known at the time.

Sayyid Ahmad believed that the rapid advances made by the physical and experimental sciences, the system of knowledge derived from the West and the missionary activities and preachings in the country represented a threat to the integrity of Islam and that this menacing trend must be arrested or the faith would be irreparably damaged. In this context, the intellectual defence of Islam had to be raised upon foundations other than traditional.

The situation then facing the faithful was not altogether unprecedented. In the brilliant Abbassid age, the eagerly studied Greek philosophy had fostered doubt and disbelief. The Muslim divines of the day improvised a dialectic to meet the challenge of the 'new learning'. To the purely academic and non-experimental Greek philosophy, they answered with apparently unrebuttable, if equally unverifiable, conjectural propositions. This technique served well at the time but was entirely outmoded in the now vastly changed circumstances. The mounting tide of scepticism was being continually fed by the momentous achievements of science. Muslim youth educated on Western and scientific lines pinned its faith on the visual and the physical, to the complete exclusion of the transcendental and the metaphysical. A new dialectic was needed to by-pass the irreligion induced by contemporary education. This consisted in proving Islam to be the religion of man intended by nature, harmonizing the doctrines of the Quran with the conclusions of science where possible, and in the last resort, producing good reasons to suspect the findings of science, if the two proved irreconcilable.

Sayyid Ahmad addressed himself to this task. Religion, as commonly understood then, was in a state of perpetual warfare against Science. In this attempted synthesis Sayyid Ahmad rested his case entirely on 'nature', reason and intellect, declaring them to be infallible guides to the ultimate reality. He could perceive no conflict between the 'word of God' and the 'work of God', and made free use of the favourable

testimonials given to Islam by European scholars, maintaining that the errors of the Muslim doctors of law did not take away anything from the splendour of the faith. He measured Islam essentially in terms of the ethical values prevailing in mid-Victorian Britain, and came to the conclusion that Islam was a humane code of conduct worthy of a civilized people. He told the Khediv of Egypt that '. . . the most liberal views and opinions upon the sciences and knowledge in general are perfectly consistent with the precepts and practice of our holy religion'.[41]

But a rational presentation of Islam as Sayyid Ahmad perceived it, has to reckon with two main difficulties. First, the social morality of Islam, embodied in the *Hadis* and, second, the conventional code of Islam, called the *Taqlid*. The vast literature comprising the Traditions of the Prophet of Islam was not collected, collated and verified till long after his death. Those who engaged in this task were careful to rely upon authentic sources and veracious narrators. With the lapse of time, this writing grew in volume, occasionally falling into the hands of unscrupulous interpolators. This fund of knowledge has, time and again, furnished hostile critics of Islam with some of their most plausible arguments.

In the strategy of defence planned by Sayyid Ahmad, due heed was paid to this vulnerable spot. He made a sharp distinction between the revealed word of God (the Quran) and the human compilations attributing certain canons of conduct to the Prophet (the *Hadis*). The authority of the former is absolute. But every Tradition must pass a rigorous logical test before it can be accepted as authoritative. The reasons for this are obvious. In the first place, no *Hadis* reproduces the actual words of the Prophet, being at best a report of what the narrators understood him to say. Secondly, numerous anecdotes relating to Jewish and Christian history have unaccountably found their their way into the Muslim Traditions. Thirdly, the editors of the Traditions attached undue weight to the character and trustworthiness of the immediate narrators to the exclusion of some of the intermediaries who served as links in the process of oral transmission. Fourthly, authorities of equal repute differ violently in their estimate of one and the same narrator. Finally, some Traditions are directly at variance with the precepts of the Quran and they must be denied credence straight away. From all these considerations, Sayyid Ahmad concluded that in any sound presentation of Islam, the role of the Traditions must necessarily be a minor one. However, he indignantly repudiated the charge of trying to belittle the importance of the Traditions.[42]

The other and the more crippling brake upon the progressive tendencies of Muslim society was *Taqlid*, which meant the imperative duty of the faithful to conform to the time-honoured modes of thought and conduct considered expedient, useful or virtuous by the earlier doctors of law. The critics pointed out that this type of behaviour was repressive of all progress—social, economic, moral or intellectual. Consequently, Sayyid Ahmad vigorously advocated liberation from intellectual subservience to the past, submission of accepted values to objective criticism, breaking of the bonds of convention, destruction of the standar-

dized moulds of thought and forging of new patterns of conduct appropriate to the scientific temper of the age.

His greatest work, the *Tafsir* (the commentary on the Quran), avowedly follows the principles outlined above, but his opponents questioned his ability and competence for the task. They seized upon his insufficient knowledge of Arabic and his ignorance of the principles of scriptural interpretation. On his own part, Sayyid Ahmad branded as 'allegorical', the Quranic verses which did not immediately yield to his ratiocination. In the field of theology, he saw nothing undesirable or sinful in certain disapproved practices, like entering a mosque with shoes on.

A contemporary of Sayyid Ahmad's viewed his religious movement as 'of a negative nature', whose 'chief strength lay in denying whatever could not be defended', and that, 'having no vitality in itself', it practically 'lapsed into a sort of social and political movement'.[43] His religious theories, according to another writer, 'have not much more in view than the cajoling and caressing of "reason" and the fondling of nineteenth century Western thought'.[44] To these two judgements, a third one might yet be added:

> . . . to a considerable extent the modernisation of Islam in India was, in form, a reaction to the stimulus of Christian assault. Almost without exception, the reformers wrote their expositions of new Islam as apologetic answers to the criticism of the missionaries . . . The Christian attack was this: that Islam failed to come up to the standard of humanitarian and liberal idealism that Western bourgeois culture had produced and Western Christianity had absorbed. Those who saw the point of the attack, (Sayyid Ahmad being the foremost among them) produced an Islam which the Christian writers often claim is mostly Christian.[45]

In short, Sayyid Ahmad appealed to religion to vindicate the transitory, the politic and the expedient and his 'heresies' brought a hornets' nest about his ears. There grew up an unbending opposition to his educational projects. The pious were alarmed lest his religious ideal should corrupt the youth, and through them the future generations, by finding their way into the College curriculum. Many pamphlets were written and journals started in opposition to his ideas and plans. Threatening letters continued to pour in almost to the end. *Fatwas* confirming his apostasy were procured from the Meccan doctors of Muslim law. Undaunted he withstood all this. But his religious liberalism survived after him. Subsequent commentators of the Quran have often followed his methods of scriptural interpretation without adopting many of his conclusions.

7

IT WAS in 1858 that Sayyid Ahmad wrote his temperate and reasoned account of the causes of the Mutiny. This marks the starting-point of his public and political career though he would not allow himself to be called a politician. On various occasions he disclaimed all con-

cern with politics and statecraft and declared the educational welfare of his community to be his sole preoccupation. Such satements only indicate his anxiety to avoid any suspicion of his involvement in politics; they do not, however, reveal the informing spirit of his varied activity. A careful study of his post-Mutiny activities would, nevertheless, suggest that most of his objectives had been determined by political necessities as he himself understood them.

Sayyid Ahmad has been characterized as the prophet of an extreme political reaction among the Muslims of India. Sir Henry Cotton, for instance, charged him with political opportunism for wishing to 'seize the practical advantage which would accrue to the interests of a minority which dissociated itself from any political demonstrations distasteful to the authorities.'[46] Simplified generalizations of this nature arise out of an attempt to read his ideas in a vacuum; divorced from the proper perspective, they do him considenable injustice. His principles and policies were shaped by his enviroment and were meant to suit a particular set of circumstances. A better acquaintance with this phase of history should help a proper evaluation of his ideas and aims. Muhammad Ali, a prominent Muslim left-winger in politics, declared from the presidential chair of the Indian National Congress in 1923 that the attitude of Sayyid Ahmad Khan was eminently wise, that 'no well-wisher of Musalmans, nor of India as a whole could have followed a very different course in leading the Musalmans', and that 'it is my firm belief that his advocacy succeeded because of the soundness of the policy advocated.' 'Sayyid Ahmad's message', observes Jawaharlal Nehru, 'was appropriate and necessary when it came . . . It is possible that had he lived a generation he would himself have given another orientation to that message or other leaders could have reinterpreted his old message and applied it to changing conditions.[47]

The Indian political movement was very largely the outcome of Western influences imbibed through education. India's first Western teachers were Christian missionaries. The Government entered the field afterwards. Governor-General Bentinck decided in favour of the New (i.e. Western) Education after a prolonged and spirited controversy with the advocates of oriental learning in 1835. The department of Public Instruction was organized in 1854 and two years later the Unversities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were founded. The New Education gave a common cultural background to the educated classes (mostly Hindu) and made for an outward unity between the different racial elements living in the sub-continent. 'The language of Milton and Shakespeare became the common language of India' and 'transcended the confusion of tongues.' The writings of Paine and the Philosophical Radicals and the speeches of Burke were read by University students 'as suggesting that all the political and social evils from which India was visibly suffering might be amended by the introduction of representative institutions.'[48] Westernized Indians had little liking for Indian society.

The Indian political movement, when it began, was decidedly outlandish. The principal sources of patriotic inspiration were furnished

by English literature, European and American history and their accounts of struggles for freedom. Its leaders pondered over English rather than Indian concepts for their thinking was cast in the moulds of European experience. Their religion was that of Spencer and Comte; their philosophy that of Bentham and Mills. Paine's *Age of Reason* was more popular than the entire religious literature of Ancient India which looked like an endless void to the educated. The greatness of Indian celebrities was measured in terms of European greatness: Kalidasa was spoken of as the Shakespeare of India and Bankem Chandra Chatterjea as the Walter Scott of Bengal. The New Education however, came first of all to the Hindus; so did the new nationalism.

The influence of European thought was, however, abruptly terminated. Foreign values came to be repudiated and European certificates of merit ceased to be worth citing. The Western nations came to be branded as grossly selfish, sensual and material. As it grew, the nationalist sentiment became one of antagonism towards others. After 1870, the highly educated Hindu came to regard himself as a full grown man, unwilling to be set aside as an Asiatic. He would not be submerged under the welter of foreign ideas and was prepared to defend his 'glorious' heritage. This tendency can best be studied with reference to the Rama Krishna Mission and its spokesman, Swami Vivekananda[49] who 'on account of a shallow facility' made a good impression at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 and again at the Congress of Religions held in Paris seven years later. He fretted over the failure of foreigners to understand and interpret India, asserted that India had taught the world in the past and that the world had still much to learn from the 'spiritual Hindu nation' complaining that 'baneful influences' from across the seas had corrupted Hindu society. Hindu civilization was 'priceless' and every shred of it had to be saved for mankind. Idolatry was the most admirable and edifying form of devotion.[50] In the same strain the veteran nationalist, B.C. Pal, declared that young India was determined to read, understand and interpret history in its own way, and that she would appraise her own heroes, by her own national touchstone, and would not, on any condition accept the assay-marks of foreign appraisers, unfitted by ignorance and unqualified through self-interest, to test the truth.[51] Other Hindu intellectuals found no difficulty in extracting from meagre historical records constitutional ideas of the later nineteenth century, like limited monarchy, constitutional freedom, and the distinction between executive and judiciary. They promoted the belief that the most recent inventions of modern science were known to the authors of the Vedas and that the learning of the West had been fed upon Indian heritage.

The religio-political Arya Samaj was founded in Bombay in 1875 and worked for some time in collaboration with the Theosophical Society, which had evoked the admiration of its founder. This spiritual coalition proved embarrassing and had to be dissolved in 1881. Afterwards the Samaj headquartered itself at Lahore. Dayananda, the founder, possessed considerable erudition in Sanskrit. In his creed modern ideas are made to align themselves with reactionary Hinduism. Thus he paid homage to Western science, emphasized the necessity for social

reform, derided idolatry, scoffed at Hindu superstition and caste prejudice and strongly disapproved of child-marriage. At the same time, we find him preaching the sanctity of the cow, organizing an association for its protection and presenting a monster petition to the Government praying for the imposition of a ban on its slaughter. He preached a return to the ancient Vedic faith, stressed the Unity of God and the extirpation of alien faiths like Islam and Christianity. His battle cry 'India for Indians' was charged with momentous political consequences.[52]

Political renaissance began in Bengal where modern education reached a larger and poorer class and provided a wider basis for political feeling. The opinion of the educated middle classes (mostly Hindu) became a living force towards the close of the seventies in that province. Mass meetings and demonstrations constituted the technique of political movements of the time, which had not acquired the fullness or dimensions of those that followed them. The daily paper had not yet appeared and the weeklies supplied a sufficient quantity of news and views to satisfy the civic curiosity of an intelligent reader. The use of the platform was rare.

If the earlier exponents of nationalism in India had received their inspiration from Western political thought, the 'nationalist' movement derived its dynamism from the racialism of the day. The structure of Indian politics was raised on the foundations of race hatred. The subject has a history: the accessible British officials of the early days of the Company rule lived in India like Indians, moved freely and made friends among the people, followed the 'native' usages, contracted matrimonial or semi-matrimonial relations with Indian women and settled down in the country after their retirement to escape the tedious adjustment to the unaccustomed environment of Britain. But by the time of the Mutiny, the English had constituted themselves into a caste 'disliking and disliked by all their neighbours'.

With the opening of the Suez Canal the Englishman's visits to England became easier and more frequent. As the home ties were revived, those with India were correspondingly weakened. Englishwomen felt no longer reluctant to seek matrimonial careers in India. While their influx into this country completed, so to speak, the personnel of the Anglo-Indian society, their feminine conservatism tabooed all social intercourse with Indians.

Another contributory cause of this racial bitterness was the institution of competitive examinations. Recruits to the Company services were formerly drawn from families having traditional association with India and their sympathetic knowledge of the country and its affairs qualified them for their responsibilities, but the competition wallahs were decidedly less considerate towards Indians. With little experience of Indian peoples and conditions, they were called upon to fill positions calling for statesmanship of a high order, and habitually adopted an insolent demeanour of assured superiority to cover their ignorance. Finally, with the development of the administrative system, an increased volume of work done under onerous conditions left the officials little time or inclination to enter into personal ties with the people.

All along, the bitter memories of the Mutiny continued to rankle on both sides, and, in course of time the alteration between the two was complete. To the British, India was a land of regrets, of heat, insects and malaria, and they fancied that they were condemned to a life of exile amidst a people half savage, half decadent. Not only did they despise their dark skins, they also scorned all Indian art and literature. Thus, Governor-General Bentinck seriously considered the proposal for demolishing the Taj Mahal to tide over the financial difficulties of the Company by the sale of its marble. He was diverted from this course because the test auction of materials from the Agra palace proved unsatisfactory. As a rule the governing classes did not bother to know much about the country or its people. Lord Dufferin, otherwise an astute administrator, could never wholly master the distinction between the two widely different provinces of Bihar and Berar.[53]

Some Englishmen in India even 'forgot the most elementary rules of decent behaviour'. Indians were not allowed into English society, restaurants and clubs. In a garden enclosing a memorial to Mutiny victims at Cawnpore, no Indians, except gardeners, were permitted to enter. It was dangerous for Indians to visit public places frequented by Englishmen. This hatred and fear was nourished by the scandal of frequent murders and brutalities visited upon Indians by Englishmen where the culprits either remained unpunished or were let off with light penalties. The life of the Indian was held to be of no account. There are instances of prisoners blown away with guns or hanged without the formalities of a trial and the excesses of officials condoned. Sir Bampfylde Fuller has recorded that when he drove through the streets of Cawnpore along with the District Officer, the latter cracked his whip at the passers-by who did not hastily obliterate themselves.[54] The fun and frolic at English social gatherings included caricatures of Indian life, which only served to deepen the spectators' contempt for the Indian way of living. Anglo-Indian circles deprecated and derided the 'national' movement as a school boys' agitation. The more anglicized an Indian, the more detested he was by the English. The few educated Indians who come into Kipling's pages would seem to have been introduced to satisfy the deep-seated prejudices of his countrymen in India. Sir Henry Cotton tells us how on his first arrival in India, his more experienced colleagues impressed upon him the vital importance of exacting all outward deference and respect from the Oriental.[55] Some English officials thought it beneath their dignity to return the visit of an Indian acquaintance, regardless of the latter's eminence or character.

Racial antipathies were aggravated, as never before, by the noisy agitation engineered by the European planter community against the Ilbert Bill (1882). This moderate measure, which involved no new principle and aimed merely at correcting a comparatively minor procedural anomaly in law by conferring upon Indian magistrates of a certain standing the power of trying European criminals, was greeted with a chorus of rancorous denunciation. If allowed to pass without opposition it would have proved innocuous and completely ineffective in any direction. Governor-General Ripon who had approved of that

Bill was slighted and vilified. But his dignified attitude in the face of his countrymen's unreasonable clamour enhanced his personal popularity and created the Ripon legend in India. The agitation contributed powerfully to the growth of anti-British feeling in the subcontinent.

The various streams of discontent against British rule merged into a torrent and the Indian National Congress was born in 1858. The body owed its inception to the exertions of a retired English Civilian, Mr Hume, (a man of ability and private means, and the son of a well-known English Liberal) and the encouragement of Governor-General Dufferin. A member of the Bengal Civil Service, Mr Hume continued to live in India after his retirement from public service and conceived the idea of an All-India organization for the 'social regeneration of India as a means for political advancement'. Consequently, he addressed an open letter to the graduates of Calcutta University in which he stressed the need for union and organization, asserting that the Government was out of touch with the people and had failed to solve the economic problem. The work of reconstruction, he pointed out, would have to be done by the people of the country themselves and not by a foreigner however much he might love the country. The Governor-General, who did not wish to be publicly associated with the idea till he was relieved of his office, desired this organization to develop into a responsible opposition. Mr Hume even proposed that a provincial governor be allowed to preside over its deliberations. But Dufferin did not approve of the suggestion. At the second annual session of the Congress the Governor of Madras entertained the delegates to an evening party. Thus, the relations between the Congress and the Government were quite cordial in the beginning. The declared object of the Congress was to weld together the different elements in the life of the country into a 'homogeneous' nation. The character of the Congress as a political organization could best be inferred from the policies and principles of two of its outstanding leaders, B.G. Tilak and S. Banerjea.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak (d. 1920) who graduated with Honours from the Bombay University, took to journalism and entered public life in the early eighties. But it was during the agitation against the Partition of Bengal[56] that he came to the forefront of the political struggle. For the rest of his life, he continued to exercise a decisive influence on the policies of the Indian National Congress. His learning in Sanskrit was profound and his knowledge of Indian antiquity remarkable. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was an adroit politician, who stood for direct action and despised parliamentary methods of opposition. He revived militant Maratha religious and political tradition and carried it into the Congress. 'It was an idea with him that Indians should never express appreciation of anything, however good, done by the Government, for that would blunt the edge of agitation.'[57] He was quick to seize any opportunity and was an adept at improvising new ones to stir up disaffection against India's past (the Muslim) and present (the British) rulers. With him any stick was good enough to beat the adversary with. When, for instance, the Age of Consent Bill became law (1890) he thundered out curses on the Hindu supporters of the measure, and

branded them as renegades and traitors to the cause of Hinduism.[58] He started an anti-cow-slaughter society and agitated against the Government ban upon music before mosques (a prohibition designed to remove one of the sources of irritation between the two communities) as offensive to the Hindu sentiment.[59] The annual fairs that he organized to do honour to the Hindu god of learning, Ganesha (and known as Ganpati celebrations) provided the much sought-after opportunity of maligning the 'enemies' (the British and the Muslims) in folk-songs. His violent denunciation of the unpopular anti-plague measures led to the assassination of two British officers (1897). In short, the course of Hindu revival in all fields of activity under Tilak was invariably and methodically anti-Muslim and anti-British and his 'Indian' nationalism was, therefore, indistinguishable from Hindu nationalism.

Surendranath Banerjea (d. 1925) may be easily named the first Indian 'whirlwind campaigner'. He joined the Indian Civil Service (in the sixties of the nineteenth century), from which he was removed a few years later, when he entered public life and finally took to teaching and journalism; he was the central figure on the Congress platform for many years and lived to serve as a minister under the Government after 1921. He was the guiding star of the political awakening that came over Bengal and the rest of the country. Thrilled by the cult of Mazzini, he popularized the Italian patriot among the young men of Bengal by having his works translated into Bengali. He said in one of his speeches that he was out to shake the foundations of the British rule. The contempt proceedings instituted against him, as editor of the *Bengalee* for criticizing an English judge who had brought a Hindu idol into his court room, and his subsequent conviction caused a tremendous emotional stir and provoked an outburst of indignation.[60] He taught the young men of Bengal to be independent and aggressive and laid the foundations of bitter anti-foreign feelings.

8

YEAR AFTER year, the Indian National Congress passed resolutions demanding the introduction of representative and democratic institutions in India. The tone of the speeches made on its platform was moderate and conciliatory, but Sayyid Ahmad viewed its demands as premature. His thinking on the subject was deeply coloured by the memories of the Mutiny. He abhorred all organized political activity and presumed that the movement launched by the Congress would ultimately provoke an armed conflict between the rulers and the ruled. A heavy penalty had been exacted from the Muslims, he said, for their 'complicity' in the events of 1857. If things went awry a second time, they would be totally annihilated as a community. He would have the Muslims eschew all politics and put implicit trust in the Government: 'If the Government fight Afghanistan or Burma, it is no business of ours to criticise this policy. Our interests will not suffer from these matters being left in the hands of Government'. This part of Sayyid Ahmad's teaching continued to dominate the Muslim mind till after his death.

The community did not consider it wise to indulge in agitational politics and even those who loathed Sayyid Ahmad's theology, heartily acknowledged his political sagacity. Prominent Hindu leaders tried hard to secure Muslim participation in the Congress, sometimes even paying the fares of Muslim delegates and offering them other inducements, but the results were not very encouraging.[61]

In the absence of Hindu-Muslim unity, it was futile to expect success from any political movement. Sayyid Ahmad was probably the first statesman in the sub-continent to have perceived the dangers inherent in foisting Western democratic institutions upon a land of India's diversities and dimensions. He wrote in an article:

> I seriously pondered over the suitability (or otherwise) of the representative system of government in India long before the Congress took up the matter. Having carefully gone through the (clearly explained) opinions of John Stuart Mill, I am convinced that where the majority vote is the decisive factor in a political system, it is essential for the electors to be united by the ties of race, religion, manners, customs, culture and historical traditions. In the presence of these factors, representative government is practicable and useful; in their absence, it would only injure the well-being and tranquility of the land.[62]

He reasoned that an educationally backward and economically impoverished minority, like the Muslims, would be permanently submerged under a democratic constitution. In the popularly elected legislatures, the incidence of authority would always be biased against them for Hindu votes would naturally go to Hindu candidates. Likewise, Muslim voters would vote for their own co-religionists, so that the proportion of Hindu legislators to their Muslim legislators would be four to one 'because their population is four times as numerous. Therefore, we can prove by mathematics that there will be four votes for the Hindus to every one for the Mohammadans . . . It would be like a game of dice, in which one man had four dice, and the other only one'[63] Things would be still worse for Muslims if the franchise were restricted to the holders of property or earners of income. In that case, the number of qualified Muslim voters would be negligible.

Sir Henry Cotton, who castigated Sayyid Ahmad as a turncoat in politics and whose experience of Indian affairs was unrivalled in his own day, admits that the system of election was unsuited to Indian conditions because 'it has proved a practical obstacle to the success of local self-government . . . It has proved on occasions to be the source of racial and religious quarrels. It is a practical difficulty in the way of providing adequate representation of minorities, such as Mohammadans for instance; a difficulty which exists in a greater degree in India than in most countries'.[64]

The acceptance of Sayyid Ahmad's political lead resulted in certain gains, both long-range and short-term, to the Muslims. But it had its injurious consequences as well. The Muslims remained wedded to a tame submissiveness even when events failed to justify a trust in 'the sense of justice of the British Government and the fair-

mindedness of the British people.' The apathetic detachment of Muslims from the political movement prevented the growth of political maturity while dependence upon the Government sapped their initiative. To their economic and educational ills was added political backwardness. The Government could not always resist the demands of the vocal, organized and determined majority. The Muslims, who were taken for granted, could be easily trifled with and the community was accustomed to receiving rebuffs from the authorities in a spirit of stoicism.

9

THE WRITTEN or spoken word of a prolific writer and ready speaker may be easily misconstrued. Sayyid Ahmad wrote extensively and spoke frequently. A collection of his speeches and writings would fill many bulky volumes and a clever juxtaposition of extracts from them can be made to attribute to him opinions which he would have been the first to disavow. A recent publication,[65] half propagandist and half scholarly, sets out to do this job. It traces the deterioration of Sayyid Ahmad's liberalism to the single influence of Mr Beck, the Principal of M.A.O. College. By significant omissions, tendentious editing and by setting aside a mass of incontrovertible facts, its author builds up a thesis well worth scrutiny. He bases his conclusions upon extracts from some of the speeches made by Sayyid Ahmad. They run as follows:

A community is constituted by those who inhabit one and the same country. The terms Hindu and Muslim have a denominational reference only. In fact, all communities domiciled in India are one people . . . . . . Their political interests ought to be indistinguishable. This is not the time to allow religion to draw dividing lines between the citizens of a state.[66]

Addressing a deputation of Arya Samajists at Lahore, Sayyid Ahmad is reported to have said:

You distinguish yourself from others by the appellation of 'Hindus'. I cannot agree to this. Hinduism is not an orthodoxy. Everybody living in this country can style himself a Hindu. I am sorry to have to point out that you do not take me for a Hindu, although I am as much a son of the soil as you are.[67]

Replying to an address of welcome by the Indian Association of Lahore, he observed:

I regard Hindus and Muhammadans as my two eyes. The people would generally mark a difference by calling one the right and the other the left eye; but I regard the Hindus and Muhammadans as one single eye. I wish I had only one eye, in which case I could compare them with advantage to that single eye.[68]

Continuing, he said:

By the word 'nation', I mean both Hindus and Muhammadans. This is (how) I define the word 'nation'. In my opinion, it matters not whatever be their religious belief, because we cannot see anything of it; but what we see is that all of us, whether Hindus or Muhammadans, live on one soil, are governed by one and same ruler, have the same sources of our advantage, and equally share the hardships of a famine. These are the various grounds on which I designate both the communities that inhabit India by the expression 'Hindu nation'.[69]

Speaking of the M.A.O. College, he told the same audience:

I would be sorry if anyone were to think that the College was founded to mark a distinction between the Hindus and the Muhammadans. All rights at the College which belong to the one who calls himself a Muhammadan belong without any restriction to him who calls himself a Hindu. There is not the least distinction between the Hindus and Muhammadans . . . both are equally treated as boarders.[70]

The above extracts are taken exclusively from the record of Sayyid Ahmad's itinerary in the Punjab in early 1884, when he was feted on all sides. Sayyid Tufail Ahmad, the author of the work mentioned at the beginnning of this section builds his thesis on such quotations and concludes that:

Sayyid Ahmad was a generous radical, genuine patriot and an ardent 'nationalist', who saw in Hindus and Muslims the two components of the 'Indian Nation', and all this up to 1884. But after that date, he began to lose faith in old causes, drift away from time-honoured loyalties, view things from a narrower and more exclusive angle, and emphasize and consolidate Muslim separatism.[71]

The instigator of this metamorphosis, we are told, was no other than Mr Beck. The next six paragraphs provide a short English summary of Sayyid Tufail Ahmad's long story originally told in Urdu.

When Mr Beck joined the M.A.O. College he was comparatively green for the charge. Nevertheless, he was a fine speaker and much too astute for his years. In some circles he was accused of taking his duties lightly and spending most of his time 'roving and rambling'. Maulavi Sami Ullah, particularly, chafed at this. But Mr Beck met Indians on terms of perfect equality and his urbanity won him many friends. He wormed himself into Sayyid Ahmad's confidence and began to wield a prodigious influence over the old man. His suavity was viewed as a transparent guise for his insidious designs.

In the course of his first tour of the country, Surendranath Banerjea visited Aligarh in May 1884 and addressed a public meeting at the Institute Hall under the presidency of Sayyid Ahmad. Banerjea's oratory kept his listeners spellbound till late in the evening. He advocated the removal of the embargo on the entry of Indians into the Indian Civil Service by liberalizing the rules of recruitment, the sending of elected, instead of government-appointed, representatives to the

legislative councils and a drastic overhauling of the outworn and irresponsive administrative system. He complained: 'We fill the exchequer and they (pointing to an Englishman present in the assembly) appropriate the revenues to their own advantage.' The Englishman particularized was Mr Beck who found it most embarrassing to be thus singled out by the accusing finger of the orator.

When the meeting ended, some of the students present at the meeting accompanied Mr Beck to his residence. In the conversation that followed he paid a striking tribute to the speaker who, he said, looked like the typical British parliamentarian speaking to his constituents rather than an Indian politician addressing his own countrymen. But the speech, pointed out Mr Beck, ill-accorded with the temperament of the people to whom it was addressed. Such sentiments had better be confined to the timid and talkative Bengalis. But if they travelled to Northern India, the home of virile races, they might give rise to unwholesome consequences. Banerjea's speech worked a change in Mr Beck who took it into his head to save upper India from the infiltration of new ideas. Whenever he came across a Jat, or a Pathan, he confronted him with the inquiry: 'Would you warlike people allow yourselves to be governed by the pusillanimous Bengali?' The answer was invariably in the negative. 'But', Mr Beck would turn round to say, 'that eventually would be the state of affairs if Civil Service Examinations came to be held in India. Your children could never successfully compete with the Bengali and that would perpetuate Bengali domination.' From that day Mr Beck resolved to keep Sayyid Ahmad at a distance from the popular and progressive political movement. He proceeded with his machinations surreptitiously and steadily and waited for an opportunity which was not long in coming.

Overburdened with numerous engagements, public and private, Sayyid Ahmad could hardly devote sufficient time to his magazine, the *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, which was languishing in incompetent hands. Mr Beck, who had a flair for public speaking and popular journalism and was, moreover, anxious to enter the arena of politics as a prize-fighter, volunteered to take over the *Gazette*. The offer accepted, he filled its columns with articles deprecating popular demands and deriding their advocates. These writings were attributed to Sayyid Ahmad and his relations with the Bengalis were sorely strained. Sayyid Ahmad's hostility to the Indian National Congress, based on cold calculation as it was, provided a fertile soil for Mr Beck's propaganda. Abandoning his old convictions, the leader embarked on a campaign against the system of elections, the competitive examinations and the identity of Hindu-Muslim interests—causes he had espoused in the past. This is borne out by his famous Lucknow speech delivered on 28 December 1887, in which he inveighed against the elective principle and justified the nomination of landed aristocrats to the Viceregal Council. He also opposed the transference to India of the Civil Service competitive examination held in England, for the selectees who come from there 'come from a country so far removed from our eyes, that we do not know whether they are the sons of lords or tailors and, therefore, if those who govern us are of humble rank,

we cannot perceive the fact.' He began to view with utter disfavour the the merit principle itself: 'Everyone can understand that the first condition for the introduction of the competitive examination into a country is that all the people in that country, from the highest to the lowest, should belong to one nation . . . the second is that of a country in which the two nationalities which have become so united as to be practically one nation. England and Scotland are a case in point. But this is not the case with our country, which is peopled with different nations. Consider the Hindus alone. The Hindus of our province, the Bengalis of the East, and the Marathas of the Deccan, do not form one nation. If, in your opinion, the peoples of India do form one nation, then no doubt, competitive examinations may be introduced, but if it be not so, then competitive examination is not suited to this country. The third case is that of a country in which there are different nationalities which are on an equal footing as regards the competition, whether they take advantage of it or not. Now, I ask you, have Muhammadans attained to such a position as regards higher English education, which is necessary for higher appointments, as to put them on an equal level with Hindus or not?' This change in Sayyid Ahmad's outlook was a signal triumph for Mr Beck whose ascendency over his 'medium' was complete. The old man played into his hands. Mr Beck followed up this success by persuading Sayyid Ahmad to organize an anti-Congress front in the farcical United Indian Patriotic Association. It was called 'United', because it enrolled Hindus as well as Muslims. It repudiated the Congress, challenged its representative character and affirmed loyalty to the Government established by law. One of its impetuous members invited ridicule upon himself by walking into the Allahabad Session of the Congress and conducting himself impudently, only to be expelled. The Association continued its inglorious career for five years (1889-93). Most of its business was conducted ostensibly for the benefit of Muslims and in their name.

In 1889, Mr Bradlaugh's bill seeking to reform the system of government in India came up for discussion before the House of Commons. Mr Beck felt greatly perturbed. He decided to organize opposition to the proposed measure. Accordingly, he drafted a petition to Parliament on behalf of Indian Muslims certifying to the unwisdom, if not positive danger, of introducing popular government in a country with a hetergeneous and multi-racial population. Groups of students were sent out to canvass signatures for this queer entreaty. Mr Beck himself headed one of these parties. His crew occupied positions on the steps of the principal Mosque of Delhi and obtained the signatures of Muslims returning from prayers on the pretext that these would be used to counteract the Hindu demand for a ban on cow-slaugter. Finally, this ludicrous petition bearing 20,735 signatures was despatched to England in 1890 to be laid before the House of Commons. But it failed. The Indian Councils' Bill was passed into law in 1892.

Mr Beck, however, did not lose heart. The fateful riots of 1893 gave him yet another opportunity of driving a wedge between the two communities: the Hindu-Muslim fracas in Bombay, the Ganpati fair of Poona, in which a frenzied Hindu mob desecrated a mosque, and

the frantic Hindu agitation for securing legal prohibition of cow-killing provided Mr Beck with the much-needed excuse for dissolving the Patriotic Association. On its ashes, he raised the exclusively Muslim organization known as the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental Defence Organization of Upper India. Thus ended the semblance of Hindu-Muslim concord. Even an unholy alliance between the two communities was an eyesore to Mr Beck.[72]

This is a highly plausible reading of the facts. Sayyid Tufail Ahmad's intimate contact with Aligarh, spread over decades, has enabled him to rescue valuable facts from oblivion. Nevertheless, his narrative is highly purposive and his conclusions cannot be accepted unreservedly. It would, no doubt, be flying in the face of facts to claim a cast-iron consistency for Sayyid Ahmad's political views. He had, for instance, identified himself with the demand for 'simultaneous examinations' by presiding over the public meeting at Aligarh in 1884. In 1887, he ranged himself against it. He had sternly discountenanced the Muslim right' to cow-slaughter, but ultimately lent the authority of his name to a body insistent upon vindicating it. He first eulogized the Bengalis and later characterized them as architects of ruin. His inconsistencies and contradictions can be easily resolved if we bear in mind that he was not a democrat or a nationalist, as we understand these terms. He did toy with democratic ideas for some time, but they never pierced the armour of his aristocratic conservatism. Sayyid Ahmad's Punjab utterances read like the valedictory address of a good-will mission. But a careful perusal of his writings and speeches would reveal that he never accepted Hindu-Muslim unity as a *fait accompli*. Again and again, he exhorted the two people to cultivate mutual trust and tolerance for in this alone lay their salvation. The two communities, he used to say, are inescapably linked together. Religion is personal, but our humanity is common. We lived together, he said, suffered together and died together and therfore we must behave as charitable neighbours.

The charge that Sayyid Ahmad's distrust of popular institutions was altogether Beck-begotten is refuted by his observations on the Local Boards Bill (1883) in the Supreme Legislative Council, where, at at his instance, the device of nomination was introduced to rectify the injustice to Muslims under the elective system. His argument on the occasion ran thus:

> Ours is a vast country inhabited by diverse folks deeply divided by racial and religious antagonisms. They lack homogeneity. Different sections of the population stand at varying levels of cultural development. So long as religion and caste are the chief props of the Indian social system, electoral machinery based upon the Western pattern would lead neither to equality nor to fraternity. It would enable the more advanced sections of the population to hold their less fortunate countrymen in thraldom. Cultural differences, caste dissensions and religious wranglings would be more pronounced than ever. Inequalities would sink deeper into the structure of society.

The failure of the competitive examinations to produce the right

type of administrator in the Indian conditions can be read in his critique of the Indian Revolt written as far back as 1858. His opposition to the Congress was forthright and easily intelligible to any one familiar with the working of his mind. It is unfair to charge Sayyid Ahmad, as Sayyid Tufail Ahmad does, with abandoning his views about the desirability of popular elections and competitive examinations in 1884, which he had never actually held. However, a hardening of his views is unmistakable towards the close of the eighties, provoked by the rise and growth of Hindu nationalism, the highly provocative hymns of hate on the tongues of Tilak's followers and the bitterly aggressive tone of the Bengali Hindu Press towards the Muslims. And even if the responsibility for reorientating Sayyid Ahmad's politics be laid at Mr Beck's door, the latter had the logic of facts on his side. That Sayyid Ahmad never regarded Hindus and Muslims as *one* people will be evident from the following passage in his treatise on the Indian Revolt. He charged the British with the error of packing two discordant elements together in the units of the Indian Army:

When Nadir Shah conquered Khurasen and became the master of the two kingdoms of Persia and Afghanistan, he invariably kept the two armies at equal strength . . . When the Persian army attempted to rise, the Afghan army was at hand to quell the rebellion, and *vice versa*. The English did not follow this precedent in India . . . Government certainly did put the two antagonistic races into the same regiment . . . It was only natural and to be expected that a feeling of friendship and brotherhood should have sprung up between men of a regiment constantly rubbing shoulders together and thus . . . the difference which exists between the Hindus and the Muhammadans in these regiments (had) been almost entirely smoothed away.[73]

The advice smacks of the well-known dictum divide and rule and is thoroughly Machiavellian in spirit. But the mood is not represenative of the man; it is, nevertheless, the unsophisticated expression of convictions held in his pre-public days.

The story of Sayyid Ahmad's relations with the other community can best be studied with reference to the linguistic controversy which raged unabated from his day till half a century after his death. He broke many a lance with Hindu publicists and it was during this debate that he was driven to the belief that Hindu-Muslim unity was a forlorn hope. The following narrative given by Sayyid Ahmad's biographer, Altaf Hussain Hali, reveals his attitude towards the Hindu Muslim problem:

Ever since 1835, Urdu had served as the court language and the common medium of communication in the Punjab, North Western Provinces and Bihar. Regarding it as a relic of Muslim domination the Hindus desired to be rid of it. An organized move in this direction was launched from the city of Banaras. A cultural centre in the city took the lead. A vast network of associations, societies and groups with different names, but with the one object of supplanting Urdu with

Hindi, sprang up throughout these provinces. A central office was opened at Allahabad to plan, co-ordinate and direct the activities of these satellite, and, in some cases directly affiliated, bodies. Sayyid Ahmad viewed these developments with undisguised misgivings and felt that they augured ill for the future; in the face of such a cultural fissure, he thought, the two communities would inevitably fall apart. His conversation with an English civilian, Mr Shakespeare, on the subject runs as follows, . . . 'In the course of my talk on Muslim education, Mr Shakespeare felt amazed and inquired 'How is that? I never heard you talk of Muslims alone. I have known you to be all along interested in the welfare of both communities equally.' I told him that the current disputes had convinced me of the futility of expecting the two communities to join hands on any issue whatever . . . At present the danger is almost imperceptible. But disruptive elements are too strong to be held in check. They are bound to triumph in the long run. Those who live after me will bear me out.'[74]

About the same time, the cause of Urdu received a serious setback in Bihar where the Governor of the province ordered the replacement of Urdu by the Bihari language in the law courts, declaring that an unintelligible language like Urdu was administratively inconvenient. This initial success gave a fillip to Hindu efforts. In the late sixties and off and on till the nineties, mass meetings were held in the North Western Provinces and the Punjab; memorials signed by thousands of Hindus praying for the suppression of Urdu were submitted to the Government. The language controversy came to engage the whole of Sayyid Ahmad's mind. His *Institute Gazette* which had been started in 1866 in order to educate the country in the politics of England, the Empire and the world at large, was silent on these subjects in 1869, and its pages were entirely devoted to the Urdu-Hindi controversy. He thus wrote to Mehdi Ali in a remarkable letter:

It is disquieting for me to learn that on Babu Shiv Prasad's initiative Hindus are determined to discard the Urdu language and the Persian script. These are a precious legacy of our glorious past. We cannot agree to their supersession. I also understand that Hindu members of the Scientific Society are asking for the publication of its journal in Hindi instead of Urdu and also desire the translations to be made in Hindi. This is the way to a rift. If it comes to be, it would open an unending vista of split and strife between Hindus and Muslims. The rupture would never be healed . . . The two communities would be irrevocably rent asunder . . . So far so good . . . I am quite confident that if the two peoples ordered their affairs separately, Muslims stand to gain everything and Hindus to lose much . . .[75]

In visualizing Hindus and Muslims parting company to put their respective houses in order Sayyid Ahmad revealed a striking premonition of momentous historic developments.

The importance of the language question is apt to be overlooked in the political conflicts between the communities. The linguists tell

us that every social differentiation gives rise to special forms of speech which then emphasize and enhance social diversity and further that national consciousness sees in the national language the principal traditional bond of the community, the means of educating people to solidarity, and a symbol of national personality.[76] Every script, moreover, is characteristic of the group mind. The Hindus of upper India continued their campaign and fought for the legal position of Hindi in courts, administration and schools for almost two generations after Sayyid Ahmad's death. They have also been seeking to rid their language of all foreign elements. Jealousy of Islamic influences has been most marked. Writers of Bengali, Marathi and Hindi have been systematically eliminating from their writings words of Muslim origin, this literary purism being plainly inspired by political motives.

That religion is the basic ingredient of the Muslim concept of nationality is the most recurring refrain of Sayyid Ahmad's speeches and writings. A few typical extracts will bear this out:

Some reflection is required to grasp the nature of Muslim nationality. From time immemorial, communities have been held together by ties of common descent or common homeland. The Prophet Muhammad obliterated all territorial and ancestral conventions and laid the foundations of a broad and enduring kinship which comprehends all those who subscribe to the *formula of faith* . . . This tribe divine assimilates all human beings regardless of colour or place of birth.[77]

We Muslims should hold religion in our right hand and wordly pursuits in the left . . . In Islam alone lies our salvation', he told a gathering of Muslim students at at Lahore. 'I use the word community to include all Muslims. Faith in God and His Prophet and the proper observance of the precepts of the faith are the only bonds that hold us together. You are irrevocably lost to us if you turn your back upon religion. We have no part or lot with transgressors or derelicts, even if they shine like the stars of the firmament. I want you to dive deep into European literature and sciences but at the same time I expect you to be true to your faith.[78]
Describing the aims of Aligarh education, he told the Mohammadan Educational Conference:

Internal solidarity is the first requisite of our national well-being. It is essential for us to practice Islam. Our youth must receive instruction in the religion and its history alongside the English education. They must be taught the postulate of Islamic brotherhood, which is the most vital and intimate part of our faith. An acquaintance with Arabic or at least Persian, is necessary to counteract disruptive tendencies. Fraternal feeling within the group can be best fostered by a large number of students living together, eating together and studying together. If this cannot be brought about we can neither progress, nor prosper, nor even survive as a community.[79]

It is clear from all this that for Sayyid Ahmad religious sentiment alone imparted cohesion and homogeneity to the community. 'If that

feeling ceased to exist Muslims would perish as a community.' Moreover, he set a high value on the internal unity of the faithful. Nothing irritated him more than the attempts to fan the embers of sectarian controversies. The M.A.O. College provided religious instruction to Shias and Sunnis by the divines of their respective sects and its mosque is probably the only mosque in the world where the two sects held their congregational prayers side by side.

Writing in 1920, Professor R.N. Gilchrist, who drew upon his immense erudition to expound the 'constructive side of Indian nationality', declared 'though the normal bases of Western nationality may be absent in India . . . it may be possible to trace certain threads which, woven together, may serve to bind the various antagonisms of India together at no distant future'[80] and found religion and language to be the two main obstacles to this consummation.

'That politics and language are closely connected in India needs no demonstration'.[81] 'National unity, if it is to be more than the ramshackle unity of Austria-Hungary where the oath of allegiance was administered in eight different languages, must have a common medium of expression.' He deals with this difficulty in a long argument and concludes that 'in a common language . . . will be found one element of Indian unity' and indicates that language to be English, which would serve to unify the Empire as well as mankind.[82]

Speaking of religion, he says, 'I repeat that religion is the central antinomy of India' and 'The Hindu writer or politician almost invariably speaks of the future India as a Hindu India. I could fill this book with quotations from speeches in various Councils and Congresses, from pamphlets, books and articles, in which Hindu speakers or writers envisage a future India as Hindu India.'[83]

But all the facts, says Professor Gilchrist, do not altogether point that way . . . 'there are many Hindus of lower classes whose Hinduism contains considerable flavour of Mohammadanism . . . many Mohammadan converts from Hinduism have preserved much of their Hinduism.' Professor Gilchrist treats this and certain other facts of economic life 'as having superseded social or religious differences. But after a fuller analysis, he writes in despair: 'In India the two religions are so opposed in creed and religious institutions that it may be almost hopeless to find a meeting place for national fusion.'[84]

This, however, does not discourage the Professor for he explores the subject with unlimited patience and consoles himself with the idea that after all 'the antagonisms of race, language, religion and social class are set off by a common government, equality before law, a recognized system of rights, and organizations, both local and central, which help to bring before and keep before the people the common interests on which the state and government rest.'[85] But even if these factors do not help evolve an Indian nationality, a time may come when the future India is 'so industrialized that race, creed, politics and everything else are swallowed up in Trade Unions, and Unions of Trade Unions.[86] It is not difficult to see that this argument only seeks to prop up the concept of Indian nationality on the crutches of an industrial revolution

not very far removed in point of time from an international proletarian revolution.

10

NATURE HAD endowed Sayyid Ahmad with a robust physique. His capacity for work and single-mindedness were unusual and the range of his activities and interests astonishing. He was an organizer, statesman, preacher and practician. He possessed an abundance of eloquence initiative, vigour and loftiness which mark out the leader from the flock, wielding an uncommon fascination over those who came in contact with him. He had markedly puritan leanings. No less striking was the revolutionary facet of his character. He had grown up in an atmosphere steeped in tradition; his own education had been conducted on traditional lines, but he was able to break through the crust of these imposed ideas. And yet a sector of his mind was curiously inaccessble to certain new ideas. Thus, he opposed the development of female education on modern lines and was quite satisfied with the adequacy of the old-fashioned education given them at home. He approved of *purdah* (seclusion of women) as essential under conditions prevailing in the country. He desired marriage to be contracted with due regard for consangunity and he strongly protested against Muslim youths marrying European women during their studies abroad.

We are told that Sayyid Ahmad was imperious by temperament. The charge is admitted by his biographer, Altaf Hussain Hali. In managing the College, as we have seen, he brooked no opposition to his ideas and kept dissenters away from its counsels. And yet this 'despot' could enact a self-denying ordinance by vesting the control of religious instruction at the College in a committee whose membership was, in the first intance, offered to his most unrelenting opponents. And finally, no student of Sayyid Ahmad's career can fail to be impressed by his legal temper. For long years, he had served in the judicial branch of the administration and his mind had been very largely trained by his vocation. That is why, in the field of politics he came to have great respect for constituted authority. That is why, again, this legalistic attitude is so much in evidence in his religious arguments and observations, which were always marked by an objective, analytical and incisive quality.

Sayyid Ahmad threw into sharp relief Muslim grievances against the ruler, defined their hopes and fears, prescribed the pattern of their political behaviour, purged religion of what he believed to be its accretions, laid down guiding principles of the education they could receive without damning their souls, made them conscious of their great past, and urged them to work out their salvation by sturdy self-reliance. In all this he had to encounter strong opposition, for the theoligians rejected his materialistic interpretation of religion and the orthodox abhorred his heretical admiration of Western education and culture while the politically irreconcilable scorned his enthusiastic praise of the virtues of the British rule. The masses were, at the best, apathetic to his programme of social and educational reorganization.

Yet, his influence was decisive and his ideas found wide-spread acceptance.

Essentially, Sayyid Ahmad's task was twofold. He pleaded for adjustment with the new environment created by Western influences, scientific and philosophical. With inexhaustible energy he plunged himself into the crucial task of revaluation of values for the new society that was rising on the ashes of the old. Though times had changed, the Muslims were slow to recognize this. He made them understand the quasi-permanent nature of the new order, giving the Muslims faith, self-confidence, and a new awakening. He instructed them to leave alone all political agitation savouring of disloyalty to the State. He held that the education imparted by the state-managed schools was spiritually stultifying for Muslim youth and that their educational system must be based upon independent foundations. The Urdu language embodied their cultural heritage and must be defended against hostile attacks. Parliamentary democracy in a country like India, a veritable museum of races, was an anachronism and recruitment to public service based on competitive tests would have the effect of shutting out from it the educationally backward Muslims.

True, the Aligarh movement was almost entirely confined to the Punjab and the North Western Provinces in the lifetime of the founder, but within a decade of his death it spread out to other parts of Muslim India and Aligarh became the visible emblem of Muslim hopes and desires. True also that the controversies of Sayyid Ahmad's day were being pursued at the upper level and the masses were not, for the most part, in the picture, yet Sayyid Ahmad's period was the seed time of vast changes. It was then that the issues were framed, propositions laid down, attitudes defined and the persistent pattern of Hindu-Muslim relations cast.

Let us not make the facile assumption that Sayyid Ahmad was consciously creating the separatist movement. The contributory causes of all movements in history are found in the environment itself. Leaders are seldom aware of the full implications and possibilities of the attitude they strike and the tendencies they initiate. Movements easily overflow their original banks, sluices widen into flood-gates. Sayyid Ahmad did no more than 'drive a stream of tendency' through the Muslim affairs in this sub-continent and in doing so he was making the future.

II

THE PARTITION OF BENGAL: BEFORE AND AFTER

The new problem—The partition of Bengal—The Hindu attitude towards partition—Swadeshi and terrorism—The province of Eastern Bengal and Assam—New policies—The Simla deputation—The All-India Muslim League—Muslims and the reforms of 1909

1

WHILE a whole generation of Indian Muslims had turned their backs on Western culture after the Mutiny, Sayyid Ahmad laboured indefatigably to conquer his community's aversion to it. He repeatedly proclaimed that the Muslims could only ward off annihilation by accepting Western education. The M.A.O. College and the Mohammedan Educational Conference had striven to educate the community out of its rooted 'obsessions'; but their influence was necessarily limited and the bulk of the community was either uninfluenced by, or positively hostile to, the new influences; it dreaded and detested change. So that at the beginning of the twentieth century prejudice against Western education was still strong among the Muslims of upper India and was persistently expressed in word and deed. The puritans among them boasted in the traditional Eastern fashion that no member of their family had ever tasted the salt of the English. Sayyid Ahmad's attempts at reform were resented and ridiculed. An embittered aunt of the reformer never cast a look at her nephew's face for what she believed to be his infatuation with the ways of the infidel. Mohammad Ali has recorded that when his widowed mother decided to send her eldest child to an English school, which meant nothing more than a school which imparted instruction in English as well as other subjects, the elderly male relation, who managed the family estate, declined to stand the expense, protesting that he would be no party to the bringing up of the child in the ways of unbelievers. Such deep sentiments, it must be remembered, were not inspired by mere narrowness and perversity, terms which critics are quick to employ. For Muslims, Islam is not only a religion, it is also a social system. Muslims through the ages have prized and preserved certain ethical ideas, canons of behaviour, fashions of dress and modes of education as symbols and characteristics of Islam. It was a sense of loyalty to the system which lay at the root of Muslim repugnance for Westernization. It could be more aptly described as a 'quasi-patriotic' sentiment. Nowhere can loyalties be upheld or convictions nurtured without effort or sacrifice. Devotion to their own traditions cost the community its worldly prosperity and nowhere was this lack of adjustment more visible than in the field of education. Children of well-to-do Muslim families received old-fashioned, almost medieval, schooling at home, the entire curriculum comprising about half a dozen Persian books of a cultural and literary flavour with an ethical and religious bias. Mathematics, history,

geography and natural sciences did not find a place in their scheme of studies. They did not exist even for the pedagogues. This material decadence was further aggravated by a lack of contact with modern thought. Whatever intellectual activity there was had dwindled to the composition of erotic poetry or the annotation of theological commentaries. Thus affluent Hindus and Muslims diverged considerably in their outlook on account of their distinctive spiritual foundations. Except for certain neighbourly courtesies, they lived in different worlds.

Nevertheless, the influence of the new education, though restricted in the beginning, was gradually spreading. Old ideas die hard and are seldom abandoned without a struggle. The coming of Western education greatly impaired the cultural homogeneity of Muslim society and before long the community was divided into two opposing schools of thought. On the one hand there was the frustrated, pious and die-hard Muslim who, at his worst, resembled the pharisee, crushed under the burden of a meticulous system of injunctions and prohibitions. Disgusted with the materialistic world and unable to stem the rising tide of what he termed 'irreligion' he receded into the shell of orthodoxy, zealously clinging to traditional ritualism and priding himself on his other-worldliness. On the other hand there was a miscellaneous group who had accepted the new ideas in varying degrees and who were contemptuously nicknamed the men of the 'new light'. The most important among them were the educated who, though ignorant of their own religion, were intensely proud of their ignorance. Some of them had been to Europe and had been overwhelmed by its intellectual and material achievements and fascinated by the teaching of its philosophers and savants whom they accepted as their mentors. Because of their Western training and contacts their lives had outgrown the orthodox pattern and now they could perceive nothing good in the old order which they attacked as being both decadent and rigid. Their criticism, at times, was ill-conceived and ill-delivered, calculated more to wound than to reform. They disseminated their ideas by sending deputations on tour and by holding educational conferences. When conditions altered, these products of English education came forward as leaders in the field of politics and held their own when attacked by the defenders of orthodoxy. At the turn of the century, the Muslims were still suffering from an acute sense of political vacancy. Sayyid Ahmad had preached the doctrine of education and had diverted Muslim energies to the study of the arts and sciences; politics for him were taboo. But times were fast changing. Even if the Muslims had decided to keep away from politics, political developments were too enveloping to let them alone. Muslim leadership was painfully conscious that the old order was dissolving and that new problems were emerging. They remained watchful but undecided in their line of action.

The earlier political movements in India began in Bengal and the Deccan independently and almost simultaneously. Their first leaders were provincial in outlook. Gradually mutual contacts developed and different streams of political activity coalesced in the Indian National Congress from whose ranks emerged the future all-India leaders.

Tilak, who in 1900 was the first to be so recognized knew how to whip up the religious enthusiasm and parochial prejudices of his followers. His profound learning and strict religious orthodoxy gave him a great deal of influence. He had foreseen clearly that Hindu nationalism could never become a force unless it shed its secular character. Years before he had extended the activities of his anti-cow-killing society and organized the Ganpati festival for which songs were specially composed, printed and distributed. These songs were filled with provocative themes about the historic Hindu-Muslim vendetta and the approaching day of reckoning. They fostered a fanatical Hindu class consciousness and rekindled the fierce Maratha contempt for Muslim society and religion. A small group of public men in the Congress fold was alive to the explosive possibilities of these hymns of hate. Gokhale, for instance, insisted upon Hindus carrying Muslims along with them in their struggle for national consciousness and political rights, but his counsel was not heeded. The patriot lost caste with his political associates and was condemned for his convictions.

Mr Bipin Chandra Pal (d. 1932), a towering leader of the political movement, who praised Tilak for his native intelligence, high education and firm grasp of solid realities of life and history complains that Tilak was a much misunderstood man, that his only object was to put some element of self-confidence and self-assertiveness in his countrymen and that his words and intentions were misunderstood by some people who were unable to grasp the fundamental psychology or philosophy of national life, a view it is impossible to sustain.

Tilak, the first strategist of the Indian political movement, devised an enduring technique of political action. He was convinced that the only way of extorting concessions from the British was by exhausting them with unending agitation. He was a born journalist with an unfailing eye for the potentialities of newspapers and an adroit propagandist who shrewdly sensed the value of students as allies and political instruments. He believed that Hindusim was strong enough to afford to alienate Muslims. Under him the influence of the Indian National Congress grew and its views acquired a remarkable though unacknowledged ascendancy in the highest government quarters. Politicians who made the strongest and most uncompromising speeches on the Congress platform were received by the Viceroy with marks of deference and his government sympathized with the vociferous demands of its most trenchant critics. Portents such as these were disturbing for the Muslims who had expected that the agitators would be dealt with the same severity experienced by members of their own community who had been victimized for their share in the Mutiny. But while honours and distinctions went to detractors and critics, the Muslims were 'relegated to the cold shade of neglect'. Their grievances never gained the sympathetic ear of the government, their voice was not properly heard in the council chamber or in the public office and their protests were drowned in the clamour of the more vocal elements. The Muslims gradually realized that their existence as a community was being ignored and that they were doomed if they did not organize themselves. Congress politics evoked no enthusiasm among them and

when Gokhale invited leading Muslims to throw in their lot with the Indian National Congress, they refused on the grounds that its brand of nationalism was exclusive and intolerant. The basic Muslim problem, the maintenance of a communal identity, was tersely stated by Sir Theodore Morison in the following terms:

> Thus the new school of Muslim thought, like the old, contemplates the continued existence of a separate Muslim community in India. The possibility of a fusion with the Hindus, and the creation by this fusion of an Indian nationality does not commend itself to Muslim sentiment. The idea has been brought forward only to be flouted; the pride of Muslims revolts at such a sacrifice of their historic individuality. On the other hand, there are forces at work all over Asia with which . . . perhaps, Muslims have not sufficiently reckoned. The humiliating ascendancy of Europe is emphasizing to Asiatics the value of a concept of nationality, which originated indeed in Europe, but which appears capable of thriving in Eastern soil. This conception is that the inhabitants of a given area, irrespective of race and creed, have a common interest and are bound together by ties stronger than any which connect them with persons living outside that area. The beginnings of such a national feeling are already signalized in China . . . all over India Hindus are appealing for the recognition of an Indian nation.
>
> Will Muslims have to yield to this prevailing fashion of thought? Will the brotherhood of Islam go the way of the Universal Church, and will its place be taken by territorial nationalities as yet unnamed?[1]

The grim realization, so evident from contemporary Muslim writings, caused great concern to Muslim leadership. But strangely enough it led nowhere. Leaders groped and hesitated while their desire to stand well with the rulers of the country was almost pathological. They feared that political activity, in any shape or form, would irritate the powers that be and provoke deadly retaliation. Their timorousness was indeed tragic. Sayyid Ahmad's political orthodoxy was constantly reinforced by the presence in Aligarh of a number of British professors who did their best to keep Aligarh, and through it Muslim India, on the right side of the government. Muslim abstention from politics was a decided advantage to the government. It was customary for high Government officials to pat the Muslim on the back for holding aloof from political agitation and tell him to apply himself like a good boy to his books.

However, a series of shocks goaded Muslim leadership out of its inaction. The first one came in the year 1900 when the Government of the North-Western Provinces (the province was later named U.P.) pronounced its verdict on the thirty-year-old Urdu-Hindi controversy. The Hindu demand for the adoption of Hindi (written in their national Nagri script) as the court language and the medium of instruction in public schools dated from 1867. It was plainly founded on anti-Muslim sentiment. As a language, Hindi was in its infancy and ill-adapted for the role which the Hindus sought to foist on it. Sayyid Ahmad led the

battle for Urdu and continued it to the very end of his days. The Ordinance placed both languages on a par, directed the courts of law not to refuse plaints drafted in Hindi, laid down the rule that all future Government notifications were to be bilingual and restricted Government employment to those who could use both languages with equal facility. The Hindu demand was fully met, but the decision came as a humiliating blow and caused widespread resentment among the Muslims.

The community expected Sayyid Ahmad's successor, the Secretary of M.A.O. College, to lead the opposition to the Ordinance. Mehdi Ali took up the challenge and in two mildly worded speeches, delivered at Aligarh and Lucknow within a few days, he voiced the Muslim grievance. In spite of his calculated moderation, the Governor, Anthony MacDonnel, greatly annoyed, hastened to Aligarh, where he addressed, admonished and bullied the College trustees. Brusquely he asked Mehdi Ali to choose between the secretaryship of the college and the leadership of what he called an anti-government agitation. It was a difficult choice and for a while Mehdi Ali was unnerved but the trustees intervened to force him out of the movement in the interest of the college. For a time Muslim opposition was silenced but the incident also awakened some leading Muslims to the futility of unorganized and sporadic political action.

The debate was opened by Maulavi Mehdi Hasan in a letter to the *Pioneer* asserting that Sayyid Ahmad's attitude never implied a total ban on political activity. All that the departed leader had in view was to be assured of a separate hearing of the Muslim case by the government. While he lived Sayyid Ahmad wielded enormous influence, but now that he was dead an organization was necessary to carry on his work and to keep the government in touch with the Muslim viewpoint. Mehdi Ali opposed the suggestion and accepted as valid and cogent the views expressed by Principal Beck on the subject some eight years before. Mushtaq Husain pointed out that, as a community, the Muslims were in a predicament faced with the alternatives of either marching into the Congress camp en bloc or bringing into being a corresponding political organization of their own. But association with the Congress, he argued, would be tantamount to communal suicide, which could only be averted by organizing the Muslim community to act together. Principal (later Sir) Theodore Morison joined the argument, strongly disapproving of the idea. In the course of a lengthy article he observed that if the Muslims went over to the Congress they would be outvoted and outnumbered on every issue; democracy of the kind advocated by the Congress would wipe them out of existence; if they formed a political organization of their own, men of substance would not subscribe for fear of offending the government, thus creating a rift in the community; besides, an organization of this nature could not keep itself usefully occupied over a long period because questions involving Muslim interest would not arise daily. The community had better turn to the promotion of education and economic improvement and put their trust in the government.

Morison's intervention decided the issue and the attempt to found

a political organization at Aligarh was given up. But Mushtaq Husain was unconvinced. Having despaired of Aligarh he turned to Lucknow where he summoned a convention of notables. Addressing this gathering he analysed the causes of the Muslim reverse on the language front and of the other administrative discriminations made against them all of which he ascribed to the inability of the community to send representatives of its own choice to the legislative councils. The speech reads like a plea for separate electorates. The long discussion that followed resulted in the formation of the Muslim Political Organization which languished after an uneventful career of three years. Muslim apathy towards politics was still deep-rooted and could not be easily overcome.

2

SOME WRITERS speak of the latter half of the nineteenth century in India as a period without history. The country was outwardly tranquil. The fool-proof system of administrative control established after the Mutiny continued without obtrusive modifications. The Indian National Congress met once a year for three days. Though little was heard about it during the rest of the year, new currents of thought were rising and gaining momentum beneath the apparent calm of the surface. The Hindu educated classes were growing restive under foreign domination. The last decade of the century, marked by a famine, a plague and two frontier wars, saw a good deal of uneasiness. The tone of the Press increased in vehemence and a marked deterioration came over Hindu-Muslim relations. Originally established in the Deccan, Tilak's anti-cow-killing society spread its activities to different parts of the country, sending out an army of propagandists who went from town to town and village to village distributing pamphlets and leaflets called 'the cry of the cow'. Hindus denounced cow slaughter in public meetings which were extensively reported in the vernacular newspapers. This enraged the Muslims and riots broke out in many places. It became customary for both Hindu and Muslim newspapers, not only to accuse individuals but also to cast aspersions on the other community. The signs of approaching strife were unmistakable.

Curzon came out to India as Viceroy in 1899. He entered upon his Indian career with an equipment which few viceroys have ever possessed. During the opening years of his regime he was a singularly popular figure among the Bengalis. The Press was unusually cordial towards him and the Bengalis, who regarded facility of speech as a precious accomplishment, were greatly attracted by his eloquence. But 'he pressed the doctrine of administrative efficiency too hard' and drove 'the wheels of the huge machine too fast' sweeping away abuses, remedying anomalies and raising standards. This blistering efficiency hurt numerous interests and transformed the earlier admiration into bitter resentment. This is not the place to review the changes he introduced into the city government of Calcutta or the universities of India. These measures, unpopular as they were, were somehow accepted, but the partition of Bengal in 1905 produced an outburst of anger.

In intention, the partition was the most beneficent measure of the Curzon administration, yet it was pregnant with an ominous significance. It fixed unalterably the contours of future political development, stirred up deep antipathies, plunged the country into fearful internal strife, aggravated racial animosities, dragged the Muslims into the arena of politics and brought the two communities into open rivalry. It shook the Muslims out of their political lethargy and for the first time they began to assert directly and consciously what before they had only felt vaguely and expressed indirectly. For these reasons the circumstances of the partition and its consequences deserve close study.

It was generally recognized that the boundaries of the Indian provinces were illogical and antiquated. Having been casually drawn up during the course of the British conquests the territorial divisions emerged as ill-assorted aggregations of diverse cultural and ethnic groups of which Bengal was a typical case. Because of its size and numbers, it was impossible to conduct the administration of Bengal with any reasonable semblance of efficiency. With an area of 189,000 square miles and a population of 80 millions it was a bigger charge than that of any other provincial government. In the interior of the province communications were unusually difficult. The vast territories of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa had been lumped together into one province in the days of the Moguls and the anomaly had been perpetuated by the British. As far back as 1868 its unwieldy size had been pointedly commented upon. Six years later, Assam was separated from Bengal along with three Bengali-speaking districts without protest. In 1892 the tract called the Loshai Hills was added to Assam, but even with this addition the size of Assam remained insignificant though its communications were improved as a result. Bengal still continued to be a vast territory and some division of the area was overdue. If it had not been attempted by Curzon it could not have been delayed much longer after him. It was essential to overcome the physical isolation of its eastern districts, to bring the Government nearer to the people and to introduce greater efficiency in the machinery of administration.

Sir Bampfylde Fuller, who had an intimate knowledge of the problems of Bengal and of Curzon's mind, has recorded that the export trade of Assam was severely hampered because Calcutta authorities were indifferent to the needs of the port of Chittagong. They had never taken any interest in its development nor could they be persuaded to do so. It was proposed to take the matter out of their hands by detaching certain areas of eastern Bengal, joining them to the valley of Assam (situated to their north) and providing a direct rail link between the interior of the province and Chittagong, the nearest seaport. The plan was explained to the leading men of the affected districts and they agreed.[2]

In his book, *A Nation in the Making*, Sir Surendranath Banerjea attributed partition to the civil service's hankering after prize posts and higher emoluments. He argued that because Assam was a small province, it was administered by civilians who came from other provinces for short terms of service. Each one of them had to revert to the province of his origin on the expiry of his term and accept a less elevated

position in the official heirarchy with a reduced scale of pay. For this reason civil servants as a class were keenly interested in the creation of a greater Assam with a permanent cadre of its own which could bring wider opportunities of responsible and remunerative employment. Curzon had decided upon partition in early 1904. But he kept it as a closely guarded secret and took up the question in all seriousness only after his return from England in 1905. Suppressing numerous contrary opinions in the secretariat, he claimed that he had found an unparalleled unanimity of opinion among the officials consulted and gave his verdict for partition. The finalized proposal was submitted to the India Secretary in February 1905 in a secret despatch. The latter gave his assent reluctantly. The legislation sanctioning the scheme of partition was enacted at Simla in a brief session of the Legislature which was not attended by a single non-official member. To make matters worse, Curzon's choice of Governors for the two new provinces was inept. He selected Sir Andrew Fraser for West Bengal and Sir Bampfylde Fuller for Eastern Bengal. Neither of them had served for a single day in any part of the province; neither of them could speak the the language of the people.[3]

It will be necessary at a later stage to comment upon the accounts of the partition left by interested parties. Sir Bampfylde Fuller is purposely uncommunicative and he withholds the better part of the story. But Surendranath Banerjea's version which gives a glimpse into the official mind, is a one-sided account. It can be fairly shown from the account of the partition which follows that the division of Bengal formed no part of Curzon's original programme. He drifted into the project by accident. The partition project was largely shaped during his absence from India. The legend that Curzon and his advisers were maliciously designing in silence and secrecy an abominable plan for the 'crucifixion' of Bengal is not supported by evidence. He may have suppressed opposition to the measure for he had little respect for the views of those who worked under him and it was usual for him to overrule his secretaries. Very few despatches of the Government of India to Whitehall were made public. Most of them remained and still are secret. The suggestion that the India Secretary assented to partition reluctantly was an unwarranted inference from the laconic phraseology of a state telegram. To say that the governors of the two Bengals were ignorant of the province is a studied distortion. It is true that the civil service had its own reasons for upgrading Assam to the status of a fully-fledged province, but Assam had also suffered for want of a permanent official establishment of its own. Individuals brought from other provinces to serve in Assam were sent back just at a time when they had gained local knowledge and experience.

How then did the partition come about? East Bengal had fallen into the luckless condition of being the least known, the least cared for and the most backward part of India. It lay beyond the reach of the tourist and the administrator. Its peasantry was crushed beneath the exactions of absentee landlords who squandered their wealth in Calcutta. Defective administration had ruined the area. Its vast river system was infested with pirates who caused entire boats and their crews to dis-

appear. The police system was so feeble that lawlessness not only went unpunished but also unheeded. The rulers of the province had virtually relinquished all responsibility for its government. They were too immersed in the problems of Calcutta to spare effort or attention for the eastern districts whose thirty million people were left to take care of themselves. Towards the city of Calcutta, the government was generous to the point of extravagance whilst the unfortunate eastern districts were completely neglected. They received few funds for education or for that matter for any other branch of government. The officials dreaded East Bengal as a place of banishment and only the troublesome or the incompetent were consigned to it. In short, it was the greatest blot on the British administration of India. The western areas of Bengal afforded a striking contrast to this picture. Being the first areas to come under Western influences, they were quickly developed and industrialized. The arrival of education had led to an early political awakening. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the contrast was such that it was hard to discern any community of ideas, interests or feelings between the alert, quick-witted, educated West Bengali in the vanguard of the political movement and the illiterate, indigent and depressed tiller of the soil in East Bengal, a victim of shameful government apathy. Such differences had drawn a very real, though invisible, line of demarcation between the two parts of Bengal long before Curzon appeared on the scene. But it was not this tale of woe which prompted the partition, for the administrative chaos prevailing in East Bengal was a later revelation.

The movement of ideas and official files which led to the partition of Bengal arose out of a casual suggestion made by Sir Andrew Fraser, the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, for an adjustment of the linguistic difficulty in the district of Sambalpur, then under his control. The language of the law-courts in Sambalpur was Uriya. Sir Andrew advised that it should be replaced by Hindi to bring it into line with other districts in the province. In the course of a despatch he suggested that the difficulty could be overcome either by handing over Sambalpur to Orissa (that is to say, placing it under the control of Bengal) or by transferring the whole of Orissa from Bengal to Central Provinces. This letter initiated a long argument which swelled into a voluminous file which cruised from one secretariat cabinet to another. The secretaries minuted it, each suggesting further schemes of reapportioning half the provinces of India. Eventually this imposing pile of papers was placed before Curzon who was horrified at the results of what was a truly incredible procedure. He deprecated such discussions which aimed at the creation and dismemberment of provinces lasting for 'more than a year without the file ever being sent or the subject ever being mentioned to the Viceroy'. He dismissed the whole discussion as irrelevant and recorded in May 1902 a half-humorous and half-angry note indicating that the approaching merger of Berar into British India, which had been negotiated by Curzon himself, might be used as a convenient occasion for an examination of the question of provincial boundaries and then, in about a dozen words, he referred to Bengal as an obvious subject for further inquiry.

The note, which the civil service offices called 'the round and round' circular was secured and publicized by the *Statesman* of Calcutta. Its publication made it clear that the partition of Bengal was an unpremeditated administrative act resulting from prolonged official discussions. The Government of India treated it as an indiscretion and sought to punish the paper by withholding from it the usual supply of official notifications.

The file was returned and a fresh discussion ensued. Again it drifted into several channels. An amplified version of one of these proposals contemplating the transfer of the port of Chittagong to Assam proved to be the real genesis of the partition. The principal reasons advanced for the scheme were that the overburdened government of Bengal required relief, that the administration of the districts of east Bengal was exceedingly defective and that Assam needed an outlet to the sea, which it could only find in Chittagong. Curzon recorded approval of this scheme about the middle of 1903 and addressed a communication to the India Secretary. Some time later, he undertook a tour of east Bengal to ascertain public reactions and soon realized that the scheme which would tack on the important Bengal districts of Dacca, Mymensingh and Chittagong to the small and comparatively insignificant province of Assam, would be unacceptable to the people, who resented being turned into Assamese. Curzon left for England to come back at the beginning of 1905. During his absence the project grew into a more comprehensive scheme for a larger Assam. The details of the plan were forwarded to Whitehall on Curzon's return. It was sanctioned by the India Secretary, Brodrick, with a number of minor amendments one of which related to the name of the province. Curzon had proposed that it should be christened the North-Eastern province but Brodrick urged the change to Eastern Bengal and Assam, suggesting that it was undesirable to delete the name of Assam, so widely associated with Indian tea, from the list of Indian provinces.[4]

The new province, consisting of Assam and the districts of northern and eastern Bengal, comprised an area of 106,500 square miles and a population of thirty-one million of whom roughly two-thirds were Muslims. Incidentally, this was the only major province in India in which the Muslims seriously outnumbered the Hindus. The partition decision was announced on 20 July 1905, and the new province started functioning from 16 October. Its capital was the ancient, though small, town of Dacca, noted for its unhealthy climate and difficulty of access. Very many places in the province could not be reached directly from Dacca without first travelling half-way to Calcutta. The physical features of the province, the greater part of which is included in the East Pakistan of today, are peculiar. It is mainly a water country, traversed with mighty rivers and visited by abundant rains. It yields rich harvests of rice and jute. Its teeming population is scattered over a large number of villages. In the rains, when vast tracts are completely submerged, boats are the only means of transit, and markets spring up on the banks of waterways.

The first Governor, Sir Bampfylde Fuller, arrived on the day of partition to find himself in a position of peculiar difficulty. While the

Muslims were roaring welcome and shouting congratulations, Hindu faces wore unmistakable signs of irritation. The customary addresses of welcome given to an incoming Governor were denied to Fuller by the Hindus. Their fury found expression when a crowd of young men waylaid three English women who happened to pass their way.[5]

3

HINDU BENGAL interpreted the partition, first, as an attack on its growing 'national' solidarity; later as a chastisement for its leading role in the political movement; still later, as proof of government partiality towards the Muslims; and finally as establishing 'Muslim ascendancy'. This last conclusion was based on a note, written in 1904, by a high civil servant, Sir Herbert Pisley, which stated, among other things, that 'the boundary suggested would bring within the eastern province the bulk of the characteristic Muslims of Bengal . . . (and) it (i.e. the partition) would tend, in course of time, to confer on that city (i.e. Dacca) the special character of a provincial capital, where Muslim interests would be strongly represented, if not predominant'.[6] Afterwards it was officially admitted that the government of the new province would relieve the chronic backwardness of its people and bring within their reach advantages and opportunities denied them till then. This gave infinite offence and the cry was at once raised that the partition had been deliberately effected to weaken the influence of the Bengalis. A gigantic mass movement sprang up as if overnight. Its rhetoricians roaring from house tops that the nation had been divided, maimed and ruined and that holy Bengal had been mutilated, lacerated and bled white. Poignantly they dwelt on the tragedy of the brother in East Bengal being torn away from his twin in the western province. The educated and fair-spoken adversaries of partition adopted several ingenious lines of attack. The lawyers among them assailed the legality of the partition, produced long-winded arguments to this effect and made known their intention of testing its legal validity. Pseudo-literateurs asserted that partition would spell disaster for the Bengali language and literature by severing linguistic ties. The politicians bemoaned that it would be fatal to India's political progress and to unity between Hindus and Muslims. The more highly strung discovered in it the consummation of an unholy alliance between two aggressors—the British Government and the Muslim traitors.[7] These polemics do not have to be examined at length; a few brief comments will suffice. The partition scheme had undeniable merits. It simplified administrative difficulties by creating two compact and self-contained provinces. Each of the two Bengals was more homogeneous than the older omnibus province. Both were to be administered under the same laws, in the same manner and by the same civil service. In fact the partition was justifiable on historic, geographic and economic grounds, and was administrativly desirable. The charge that it had destroyed Bengali unity was unfounded because this much vaunted unity was chimerical. If diverse peoples from provinces as far apart as Assam, Madras and the Punjab could fraternize and sing songs of national

unity on the platform of the Indian National Congress, it was not clear how the national solidarity of Bengal was broken by an administrative boundary. Bengali language had reached its full stature under Western influences. The Christian missionaries produced the first Bengali books on history, geography and other educational subjects including the first Bengali dictionary and grammar. It was Governor-General Wellesley who encouraged the cultivation of Bengali by grants of money. Again it was a British lady who founded the first school for the teaching of Bengali. The postage of the first Bengali newspaper *Darpan* was reduced to one-fourth by the Government, which also purchased a number of its copies. As things stood, the future of the Bengali language was linked with the continuance of the British patronage rather than with provincial unity. How, then, could India's political progress be retarded if a great mass of unfortunate humanity were to be reclaimed from its wretched plight. The condemnation implied in such phrases as 'unholy alliance' is symptomatic of irascibility and cannot be regarded as a considered judgement.

The truth of the matter is that the partition held out a threat to vested interests. Numerical preponderance in both Bengals was snatched away from the Hindu Bengalis who filled the professions and monopolized the public services. In the new eastern province they were outnumbered by the Muslims and in the western province by the Biharis and Uriyas. The Muslims of East Bengal were rescued from virtual subjection and were now expecting to have some say in the management of local matters. A contemporary Muslim writer, Sardar Ali Khan, observed cynically, though aptly, 'All the hue and cry which has been raised . . . and all the patriotic movements which have been so suddenly started, have nothing whatsoever to do with the Motherland or with the welfare of India. They have no nobler purpose than the maintenance of a class predominance in a province wherein the Hindus are in a distinct minority'.[8] Curzon stood on sure ground when he complained that the partition had been misrepresented rather than misunderstood.

It was generally expected that, whenever it came, the partition would give rise to some clamour. Agitation had been threatened, but no one anticipated the ferment that arose or the grim tenacity with which the campaign against it was pursued. Hindu Bengal was aflame at the birth of the new province. Surendranath Banerjea, the 'trumpeter' of the anti-partition movement, has recorded that the announcement fell like a bombshell.[9] 'We felt that we had been insulted, humiliated and tricked.' The sixteenth of October was observed as a day of national mourning in Calcutta and Hindus wore black and covered their heads with ashes. They suspended business and went without food and drink while thousands thronged the streets of Calcutta and marched towards the river to have their devotional dip, rending the air with their bellicose cries as they went. In the evening a huge public meeting was held at which the leaders took a vow to undo the dismemberment of their province.

How did the Muslims react to the partition? On the face of it, the scheme had been conceived in the interests of administrative efficiency

though plausible arguments could be advanced that the motives were political. The Muslims had not demanded the partition, far less agitated for it, but they welcomed it nevertheless and were agreeably surprised to learn that its administration would end the attitude of indifference to their well being. It was hard for them not to value this 'well deserved though unexpected boon'. The partition, therefore, arrested the growing tension between the Muslims and the government. Hindu leadership made desperate efforts to enlist Muslim support and not without some success at the initial stage, but the Muslims soon realized the meaning both of the partition and the agitation against it. They were disillusioned when the figure of Sivaji was brought into the propaganda and withdrew their support almost to a man. Sivaji (d. 1680), the famous Maratha hero, dealt the first decisive blow to Muslim dominion in India. His neglected grave was first pointed out by an English antiquarian. Tilak, at once, seized upon the idea and started a fair in honour of his reputed birthday. The anti-partition agitation found Sivaji installed as a national hero in Bengal as well. The celebrations were given a distinctly religious and sacramental character. Hindu orators represented his rising as a patriotic revolt against alien rulers and spoke of him as 'the very incarnation of the civic ideals and possibilities of the Hindu race', 'the forger of the great Hindu nation' and the 'founder of a divine and holy imperialism'. But whether the real man was what the tradition has made him out to be is open to question. The fact that his grave remained unidentified till nearly two centuries after his death should cast doubt on the legend that has grown around his personality. Obviously the Muslims did not share these sentiments. It is also significant that the nursery rhymes and ballads of Bengal breathe Bengali hatred and contempt for the Marathas, who had plundered Bengal on more than one occasion.

Khwaja Salim Ullah of Dacca, the Muslim leader of Eastern Bengal, spoke the language of reason and moderation when he told the Imperial Legislative Council that, with the passing of the years, the partition and the policy behind it would be 'better understood and appreciated'. 'Without ignoring the strong sentiment of attachment, the passionate desire to cling together, which the seeming severence had so unmistakably evoked', he went on to say, 'time would show that there had been no severence in the sense understood by those who opposed the creation of the new province; no division of the Bengali-speaking people, Hindus or Muslims, no weakening, but on the contrary a greater development of the two sister provinces; better government; better education in both; better means of intercommunication; and generally a great accession of strength to the Bengali race.'[10] But this line of reasoning did not carry conviction with the Bengali Hindus who stigmatized it as 'selfish', 'unpatriotic', and even 'treacherous'.

4

THE AGITATION against the partition of Bengal is to be reckoned among those movements in history which are nourished by an imaginary view

of things and by deep-rooted prejudices. Bengalis have been called the Irishmen of the East and certainly their exuberant emotionalism turned the campaign into one of mass hysteria. Patriotic fury vented itself first of all, in the boycott of British goods, or *Swadeshi*[11] as it was called. Used as a slogan in one meeting it was repeated in others till it acquired an overwhelming appeal. The successful Chinese boycott of American goods had already been acclaimed and admired by the Indian press. So the movement gathered strength till it gripped the popular mind. Surendranath Banerjea has left an animated account of these *Swadeshi* days in which he says that *Swadeshi* became for the people of Bengal a veritable religion. Households discarded the use of all foreign wares and English goods, wherever found, were promptly seized and publicly burnt. Students, who were found in the vanguard of the movement, assaulted any fellow student wearing clothes made of foreign material and refused to answer examination questions on imported paper. Patients in the hospitals were even heard to curse English drugs in their delirium.[12] The poet Tagore went further and suggested a boycott of Calcutta University. Although some of its manifestations might appear spontaneous, the movement owed its overall success to insidious propaganda, clever organization and open coercion. Stores dealing in foreign manufactures were fenced off from customers by pickets recruited from the schools and colleges. Students also canvassed from house to house, terrorizing shopkeepers and victimizing men and women purchasing English cloth. Hindu landlords forced their tenants to use indigenous fabrics. The movement gave an impetus to the local weaving and textile industry. The market was inundated with country-made goods and coarse country-made clothes became the hallmark of a patriot. The movement helped the rising manufacturing class, who in turn paid off their debts by liberal subsidies to the patriotic cause. Here are the unmistakable beginnings of the close collaboration between the political movement and capitalism, which was to become a marked feature of Indian politics. The Indian National Congress declared the boycott to be the only answer to the partition but ruled that it was to be confined to Bengal alone. Bengali leaders made ineffective appeals to the British Parliament and an association of Hindu merchant princes was constantly pressing the Manchester Chamber of Comerce to have the partition rescinded if they wanted to sell their goods. A telegram even went so far as to demand that this should be done before the day of a big Bengali festival during which a great deal of English cloth was usually bought.[13]

Bengali oratory, ideally suited for religious preaching, was now being adapted to political ends. Thus the struggle went on. Hardly a day went by without the partition being condemned at numerous public meetings. The audiences, driven wild by reckless emotionalism, joined processions and marched round screaming provocative slogans. Any British person who happened to pass by was abused and insulted 'in ways understood by natives but not comprehended by Europeans'. On many occasions slogans were shouted at times when the Muslims were at prayer and this led to street forays. Prominent Hindus who maintained friendly relations with Englishmen were subjected to

annoyance and molestation. At first the Government was inclined to belittle these developments and hope that the movement would destroy itself by its own excesses, but this proved to be a miscalculation. The popular awakening was so great that Surendranath Banerjea was able to claim that India in 1906 was as different from the India of 1905 as the India of 1905 was different from the India of 1855. Of course, he had primarily Bengal in mind when he spoke of India.

As has been rightly pointed out, some of the most powerful influences which prolonged the agitation came from England. To begin with, there was a telegram from the India Secretary, Brodrick, to Curzon on 16 August 1905 which because of the ambiguity of its language could be construed to indicate that the British Government was not in full accord with Curzon about the partition and had only been dragged into it by the imperious Viceroy.[14] The leaders of the agitation decided that they had only to continue the disturbance long enough and loud enough to have the partition reversed. Then there was a statement said to have been made by the British Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, when in an expansive mood, which was interpreted as an assurance that the question[15] would be re-examined. Finally, there was the attitude of Morley, who became the India Secretary at the end of 1905. After taking office, he was quick to show that he supported the partition, yet in his occasional statements 'there was always some little reservation, some slight hesitancy, some implication of doubt'[16] which served to raise hopes that it might be annulled. Indeed, there was not a single member of the Ministry who was prepared to make a forthright statement that the partition would be upheld.

The movement, which began in opposition to a so-called unpopular measure, soon acquired the force of a religious revival characterized by violent propaganda against all aliens in race and creed. A distinguished Hindu summed up the situation by saying that 'Hindu civilization was now pitted against English civilization'. The by-products of the *Swadeshi* cult included an extensive literature venomously anti-Muslim in character and numerous popular hymns inspired by Hindu mythology. A wit is reported to have said that the partition turned nearly all Bengalis into orators and that the remainder became professional journalists. The British had always taunted the Bengalis as babblers and unwarlike weaklings without inclination for physical exertion, an imputation which was at once humiliating and provocative. *Swadeshi* leaders now began to stress the need for physical development and physical culture clubs sprang up all over the two provinces. Another off-shoot of *Swadeshism* was the movement for 'national' education, which aimed at the boycott of official universities and government departments of education. Their shallow and verbal education was held to weaken 'civic aspirations'. A national council of education was set up in Calcutta which drew up an elaborate scheme under which a number of 'national' schools and colleges were opened. A 'national' university was also planned, but the project did not materialize.

The agitation gained in ferocity and its violent character led many to believe that the country was on the brink of an upheaval which would throw 1857 into the shade. A British administrator, Colonel Ross-Keppel, described 1907 as the blackest year for the British in India. Assured that the day of the British was done, the Hindu ruler of the State of Gwalior, Madhava Rao, was planning a kingdom for himself. The Free India League in London commemorated the jubilee of the rising of 1857. A 'little Mutiny' was organized to take place in Calcutta but it misfired. Newspapers openly preached extremist methods. Indian soldiers were accused of being traitors to the country. No-rent campaigns were started in different parts of the two Bengals while anti-British feeling was whipped up by all manner of appeals to passion and prejudice. The multitude was told that the government was out to destroy the cotton and sugar-cane industries; that Britain had robbed them of their real money and handed out spurious paper money instead; that the money invested in government securities was most insecure; that government officials were poisoning the wells to kill a desired percentage of the populace; and that the government supporters deserved to be turned into scavengers. A lawyer-orator from Rawalpindi declared that he would fight the government to the bitter end.

The vehemence of the agitation was fully reflected in the Press, the language of which was wild. They 'put picric acid in pen and ink' and goaded the people to rise against the tyrant and break off their chains.

The Calcutta correspondent of *The Times* collected the following specimens of the writings of the different Calcutta journals for his paper:

The only subscripton required of the readers: the head of an Englishman.

Lady Curzon's premature death is a visitation on the late Viceroy for partitioning our Motherland.

Malaria was unknown in India till the time the British introduced it by obstructing the natural drainage of the country by constructing railways and laying canals.

The Government fight against malaria was meant to enrich the British manufacturers of quinine.

The British doctor attending an Indian woman after a childbirth operation had earned a rise in his salary for taking the life of his patient.[17]

Similarly, British justice was the subject of much sarcastic comment. Most of the Bengali newspapers were edited by 'dummy' editors. If one of them was gaoled under the Press law, his place was promptly filled by another like him. Every prosecution served as an advertisement and sent up the circulation of a newspaper.

Discontent in one province reached others. Local grievances were transformed into 'national' trouble. Political unrest made its way to the Punjab, anti-Government riots breaking out at Lahore and Rawalpindi. The consternation caused by the hated Colonization Bill, which had been enacted to check fragmentation of holdings on 'colony' lands granted to superannuated soldiers, drove the Sikh soldiery into dis-

affection and mutiny. The measure was subsequently withdrawn but not before the province was on the brink of revolt. Enhanced government demand on agricultural lands resulting from a new 'settlement' resulted in a no-rent move which was energetically suppressed. At Lahore a Hindu mob fell upon Christian missionaries and pastors. The Arya Samajist leader, Lajpat Rai, boasted that no court could convict him and that no prison would hold him.[18] Similarly in the Deccan the expulsion of the British was freely talked of and Tilak presided over the bonfires of English textbooks.

Extremism also invaded the Indian National Congress. When that body met in Surat in December 1907, the advanced section would not allow a moderate to take the chair. In the fierce altercation that followed, tempers were lost, chairs, slippers and shoes were hurled, and splinters were freely used as weapons. The meeting broke up in utter confusion, and the extremists lost caste with the Congress and remained out of bounds for the next eight years. What happened in the Congress was but a pale reflection of what was happening outside.

The British Press and Anglo-Indian officials, as a class, comforted themselves with the idea that all this was the work of agitators who constituted a microscopic minority of the population. Writing in 1906, Mohammad Ali observed that the discontent was spread chiefly, though not exclusively, among the Hindus of Bengal, the Brahmins of West India and the South and a small class of the educated Hindus of upper India. But it was travelling fast and getting beyond its original confines.

In the beginning of 1908, the anti-partition movement took an organized anarchist and terrorist turn. Idolization of Sivaji concentrated attention on his methods of craft and cunning. From the assassin's dagger to the terrorists' bomb and pistol the step was but a short one. Ironically enough, the victims of the first missile, actually intended for a Calcutta judge, were the wife and daughter of an English barrister who was a keen supporter of the movement. From now on political sabotage, murders and robberies became common, repeated attemps being made to derail or blow up the train of the West Bengal Governor, Andrew Fraser. The Viceregal car was often pelted with stones and quite a few attempts were made on the Viceroy's life and he had hairbreadth escapes. The news of these assaults were either suppressed or their importance was minimized in the public eye. Lady Minto invariably felt nervous at her husband's presiding, as Vice-Chancellor, over the annual convocations of Calcutta University. The arm of the revolutionaries was long. An innocent-looking boy clad in spotless white wormed his way into the Viceregal party at Ahmadabad to throw a bomb into its midst and then disappear irrecoverably. On the wedding day of Lord Minto's daughter, a bomb was drawn out of a flower pot in the Viceroy's house. Though the exalted targets escaped a violent end, many of the victims succumbed to the outrages. For several years political murders averaged one a fortnight and the death-scattering campaign did not altogether cease with the annulment of partition. Ingenious and audacious forms of lawlessness were being continually devised and patriotic funds were systematically augmented by the proceeds of dacoities. The pistol came to be looked upon as an Alladin's

lamp of freedom. An anarchist college in Calcutta trained revolutionary patriots, as anarchists were called, in rifle exercise and bayonet practice, and issued books on the art of taking life and destroying buildings and bridges. Arms were smuggled into Eastern Bengal from the neighbouring French territory of Chandarnagore, which was regularly used as an asylum by the underground contingent. Speedy punishment of terrorist crime was difficult because lawyers took the fullest advantage of legal technicalities to prolong trials to impossible lengths. Effigies of executed terrorists were burnt with all the customary Hindu rites and ceremonies and crowds used to scramble for their relics as if they had been saints.

The anarchist literature was saturated with the cult of Hindu revivalism emphasizing its one unceasing theme that Hindu manhood was stunted and that Hindu religion was losing its vitality under alien rule. It preached revolution as a religion. Brahmins were in the forefront of this struggle and secret societies dedicated their murderous operations to one Hindu deity or the other. Their vows were taken on the sacred water of the Ganges, the ceremony of initiation being accompanied by the chanting of imprecations. The sanction for bloodshed was sought from Hindu scriptures arguing that the *Bhagwat Gita* had spoken of murder as a divinely inspired deed when committed in defence of Hinduism. The oaths of *Swadeshi* were taken in the courtyard of the famous Kali temple, incorporating Hindu rituals more than ever into the movement. This gave an immense impetus to the Hindu religion and made nationalism into a subject of endless discussion in every town and in every village in Bengal.

During the first few months after the partition, Hindu politicians from Calcutta, like Surendranath Banerjea, proclaimed that all Muslims, without exception, were with them. But they soon changed their propaganda line and the new formula stated that fanatical Muslims and their selfish and noisy clique and the patriotic Hindus of Eastern Bengal were not exactly friendly on the subject. Even this pretence had to be cast aside in the face of facts. The first anniversary of the partition was celebrated by Muslims with rejoicing, and by Hindus with grief. Yet the Hindu leaders continued to insist that neither community had gained by the partition. The province of East Bengal and Assam soon came to be called by the uncomplimentary name of Curzonian Bengal, for Curzon was detested as much as the Muslims. The use of opprobrious epithets towards Muslims became common in the press as well as on the platform. Pseudo-historians retailed stories of Muslim vandalism in the past. Sayyid Ahmad was branded as a traitor to the country and the Muslims as the tools and puppets of the government. Constant efforts were made to irritate and provoke the Muslims. Everyday the Hindu newspapers reported that the government supported the Muslims and was inciting them to attack the Hindus to whom rightful protection was refused. They urged the Hindus to arm and drill for self-protection. One of them went so far as to say that 'the desire for revenge on the part of the Hindu community will not be satisfied even with the burning alive of all Muslim *goondas* and of all the officials who are assisting them'.[19]

The Muslims resented such language. Conflict came to a head in May 1907 when there was a general rising of Muslim peasantry against their Hindu landlords and creditors in the district of Mymensingh. Another riot broke out at Calcutta almost simultaneously. Commenting on this latter event, a Hindu journal observed that the behaviour of European policemen was not half so cruel as that of their direct agents, the Muslim constables who were assisting the government repress the riot.[20] Hysterical Hindu youth, trained in physical culture clubs and armed with *lathis*, picketed Muslim shops whose owners refused to join hands with the *Swadeshi* cause. In the thick of this fight it appeared that the Muslims found themselves entirely at the mercy of the Hindus. A telegram from Simla to London stated that the Hindu leaders had permitted the Muslim traders to buy and sell English goods as a gesture of goodwill. Hindu dispatches to British journals attributed the unrest to the belief that the government was out to aid and abet the Muslims against the Hindus. The Muslim leader and jurist, Ameer Ali, pointed out that this was very much like the proverbial red herring trailed across the path of the timorous administrator to frighten him lest justice to the Muslims be construed as favouritism. The embittered feelings between the Hindus and the Muslims was no longer confined to Bengal. Other parts of the country were duly affected. Thus in the municipal elections of 1909 in the United Provinces, the Hindus were opposing all those Muslim candidates who would not pledge loyalty to the Indian National Congress.[21] Similarly, Hindus of the Punjab were boycotting Muslim traders in 1910 on the plea that the latter refused to join the nationalist movement. The Muslims found themselves in an unhappy position, neither sufficiently organized to repel this twin menace of hostile propaganda and direct action, nor prepared by education and training for the gruelling agitation that was to follow.

Mr N.C. Chaudhari, the author of *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, observes that the partition of Bengal left a permanent legacy of estrangement between the Hindus and the Muslims, and that 'a cold dislike for the Muslim settled down in our hearts, putting an end to all real intimacy of friendship'. This manifested itself in the streets, the schools and the market place but above all, it found an abiding place in the minds of men. The Hindu boys of the school in which Mr Chaudhari sat were disinclined to sit with their Muslim class-mates who, they said, smelt of onions. New arrangements were made to meet the Hindu demand by dividing each of the school classes into two sections, one formed exclusively of Muslims and the other of Hindus.[22] Thus minds had been divided long before the territories were partitioned. The Muslim reaction to these developments was decisive, some speaking cautiously and temperately, others strongly and bitterly. But all were agreed on one thing, that absorption into Indian nationalism was out of the question. Mr (later Sir) Ali Imam dwelt on the subject in his brief presidential address to the Muslim League in 1908 at Amritsar by declaring, 'We, the educated Muslims of India, have no less love for the land of our birth than the members of other communities inhabiting the country. India is not only the land of our

birth; we are tied to her by the sacred associations of ages. We yield to none in veneration and affection for our motherland . . . (But) when I find the most advanced province of India put forward the sectarian cry *Bande Matram* as the national cry, the sectarian worship of Sivaji as the national hero-worship, and the sectarian *Rakhibandhan* (a Hindu sacrament) as a national observance my heart is filled with despair and disappointment.'

The present was trying enough but the future seemed uncertain, Muslim fears about which were thus expressed by Mushtaq Husain in his address to the Mohammedan Educational Conference at Karachi in 1907:

Muslims in India constitute about one-fifth of her population. It is clear, therefore, that with the lapse of British rule, authority should pass on to those who are four times as numerous as we. What is going to be our lot then? Our honour, life, religion and belongings would all be endangered. Even under the powerful arm of the British we have our difficulties with our neighbours. Cursed be the hour which strikes our subservience to the people bent upon visiting the 'misdeeds' of Aurangzeb upon us.[23]

It is plain that this partition defined and sharpened Hindu-Muslim antagonisms. It did not create them. As for Bengal, Mr Chaudhari has recorded:

Even before we could read we had been told that the Muslims had once ruled and oppressed us, that they had spread their religion in India with the Koran in one hand and the sword in the other, that the Muslim rulers had abducted our women, destroyed our temples, polluted our sacred places.[24]

This hatred was kept alive by an extensive literature comprising historical romance and drama produced in Bengal in the nineteenth century which was read and absorbed avidly. No Bengali play written by a Hindu showed any sense of dignity and restraint about Muslims and their past in India. Bankam Chandra Chatterji, the best seller of the day was 'positively and fiercely anti-Muslim', says Nirad Chaudhari, and his stories speak of Muslims most bitterly and contemptuously.

Sir Valentine Chirol has stated that the persistence of anarchist crime created a feeling of concern and revulsion amongst a large majority of people. He makes a grievance of the fact that no one was willing to help the Government in countering hatred and violence, while the moderates blamed the Government for its omissions in the past, the educated classes were embittered by the arrogant attitude of bureaucracy. Condemnation of political murder, whenever it came was no more than half-hearted. But Nirad Chaudhari, who lived through these tempestuous days, states that Hindu Bengal regarded moderation as a sin of degeneracy and expressed its whole-hearted approval of the insurgent order. It took for granted that only military power, actual or potential, could drive the British out of the country and this idea took a firm root in all minds, young and old. Much the

same story is repeated by Jawaharlal Nehru, then a student at Cambridge. He writes of Indian student groups' talking of acts of violence in terms of warmth and admiration.[25]

5

LET US now turn to East Bengal and review its brief span of existence as a separate province. Sir Bampfylde Fuller had a difficult job before him. On his arrival he studied at first hand the dismal plight of the province and found that the landowners (mostly Hindus) were in the habit of exacting from their tenants (mostly Muslims) illegal and burdensome cesses, in addition to the legal rents. One of these cesses was for the support of Hindu temples. The landowners had practically usurped the functions of the courts of law and, as self-appointed officials, tried cases, inflicted penalties, and even kept private prisons for their victims. The educational progress of the Muslims was hampered by the lack of schools and so their share of government service was meagre.[26] The new Governor endeavoured to rectify this inequality without lowering educational standards. He interested himself in the education of the Muslim community and drew up a scheme for a University of East Bengal. He spent some money in renovating a fine Mogul mosque which had been neglected and allow to fall into disrepair. Each one of these acts was unwelcome to the Hindu intelligentsia and aroused its hostility. He was accused of harsh and provocative methods and became a target of vilification. Everything done by him was subjected to microscopic, and, of course, inimical examination first by the Calcutta press and then by the 'India' members of the House of Commons.

An incautious remark of his to the effect that the rudeness of one wife (i.e. the Hindus) was driving him into the arms of the other (i.e. the Muslims) earned for the Muslim community the loudly-noised taunt of 'favourite wife', a vulgar phrase which stuck.[27]

Hindu writers outdid each other in their condemnation of Fuller and 'Fullerism'. They charged him with initiating and promoting a campaign of repression and humiliation against the Hindus. His administration, so they said, banned the shouting of slogans in the streets, permitted assaults on delegates to anti-partition conferences, ordered in one place the enlistment of prominent Hindus as constables and placed them under the orders of a minor police functionary, prosecuted a barrister for advocating self-government and generally ignored Hindu complaints. Surendranath Banerjea declared in his *Bengalee* that the grievances of the Hindus of the new province would be shared by their co-religionists throughout the Empire.[28] Fuller was certainly placed in a very trying situation and any other administrator in his place would have had the same experience. Yet he showed considerable restraint and his rule was mild compared to what followed. He narrated his own part of the story thus:

> I did not arrest a single individual without a warrant, whereas after I left, this exceptional measure was put in force against scores

of suspects. My police never used their fire-arms, whereas, later on, to fire upon a mob became a common incidence of preventive police. There were no spectacular prosecutions for sedition . . . . . All that I did insist upon was the observance of law . . . . . I refused to allow public processions since they disorganized traffic and could easily lead to street-fighting with Muslims.[29]

Minto replaced Curzon as Viceroy in the autumn of 1905. Eager for an uneventful term of office, he soon perceived that his charge was strewn with thorns. The Prince of Wales (later King George V) was due to visit the country in 1906. It was apprehended that hostile demonstrations on the occasion, with all their discourtesy to the throne, would destroy the 'rallying' effect of the visit and impair the prestige of the administration and its head. This led Minto to make a conciliatory gesture to anti-partition leaders. He sent for Surendranath Banerjea for 'consultations'. Next he met Gokhale, impressed him with his sympathetic demeanour, mildly disavowed responsibility for the partition, apologetically averred that he had had no time to study the subject and form his own judgement on the merits of the grievance, and begged to be spared embarrassment, personal and official. These interviews gave great satisfaction to Hindu politicians and were greeted by the Bengali Press 'as establishing a friendly atmosphere'. Naturally Minto lost all interest in completing the partition and left Fuller appearing largely responsible for it. The newspapers redoubled their campaign against the Governor and made the most of every incident. In a case of great notoriety, says Fuller, where some errors of procedure attended the execution of a man named Uday Patru, condemned to death for a particularly brutal murder, they reviled him for a judicial murderer, although the responsibility rested at a lower level. When the matter was raised in the House of Commons, Morley gave an equivocal answer which was interpreted as condemning Fuller. The Governor felt that he stood without support.[30]

Matters came to a head when the students of a school in the province attacked a British bank official and raided carts laden with English textile goods. According to Government instructions existing on the subject, Fuller approached the Senate of Calcutta University demanding that the school be dropped from the list of approved educational institutions. The Government of India characterized this request as 'inopportune' and instructed withdrawal. Fuller refused compliance, protested that this would weaken his authority and threatened to resign if the Government persisted in its attitude; but the Viceroy was adamant. In a moment of exasperation Fuller resigned, hoping firmly that Minto would think many times before sacrificing him. But Minto was anxious to placate anti-partition elements and was willing to pay the price. He held Fuller's resignation to be indefensible and accepted it without any show of reluctance.[31] Fuller's downfall acted like a match to a haystack. The agitators gloated over their victory and Fuller's departure became a signal for another series of outbursts in public meetings, hysterics in the Press and brawls in the streets. He was given up in the belief that his removal would pacify the agi-

tators. But this only proved to be one of the many factors that fed the agitation. After Fuller's departure the regulations that he had sought to impose (to keep students in check) were enforced with greater rigour, and the Government was soon compelled to take action against the very school from which the trouble had started.

The Muslims, who gave a melancholy send-off to Fuller, feeling that they had been let down, deplored the hasty acceptance of his resignation which showed want of consideration for Muslim interests, and lack of continuity in government policy. In 1911 Fuller revisited India. Before his departure the India Office disallowed his proposed visits to Dacca, where the Muslims were preparing to give him a great reception, explaining that it would irritate the Hindus.

The province of Eastern Bengal, as long as it lasted, showed life and vigour. A new colony was created out of a land of chaos and the new capital of Dacca, no longer forlorn and desolate, began to expand rapidly. Trade revived, and it seemed likely to regain something of its departed glory. Within the province many waste lands were brought under the plough and public works began to receive greater attention. Grants were given for primary education and a host of other small improvements were made. But it was difficult to evict monopolies and sweep away vested interests at one stroke for, economically and financially, Hindu dominance was firmly planted in the soil. Mr Lovet Fraser, Editor of the *Times of India*, was informed by a Hindu judge 'in rising tones' that this partition could not possibly hurt Hindu interests in the new province for fifty or even a hundred years.[32] On the whole Muslims were contented. Their condition improved and with it their hopes and aspirations; but the disillusionment was soon to come.

6

AS THE anti-partition movement gained in intensity and violence, publicists, both in India and Britain, initiated long discussions about it, which, though lacking in unanimity, advanced the following factors responsible for it: Curzon's overstrenuous administration; an unrestrained and irresponsible Press; the Japanese victories over Russia; a world movement from Tokyo to Tangier; Western education with its liberal and democratic ideals; unemployment among masses of young men thrown out by the universities after a purely academic education; the rise in prices with its crushing impact on the literate classes; a Brahmin conspiracy to restore Hindu dominations.

The majority of Englishmen were singularly ill-informed about India, which appeared to them an abstruse subject for study. After 1858, the British Parliament had taken Indian affairs easily, and the British public, Press and politicians never gave it sustained or serious attention. But now that a point of gravity was reached, India began to loom large in Parliament and the former lack of interest ceased. The long-drawn-out crisis was unparalleled in the history of the British Empire since the days of Burke and American taxation. 'Indian unrest' became a stock phrase in Britain. In India, the Government was placed in a precarious position, as every alien domination under

fire is bound to be. Repression was tried first and the law of the land was strengthened in several directions. The freedom of the Press was severely curtailed and if a newspaper did not 'behave' after the first conviction, its plant could be confiscated for repeating the offence. The formation of associations 'dangerous to public peace' was forbidden and almost any organization could be held to endanger public peace. Public meetings were virtually banned, while a wild-cat law permitted summary trial for revolutionary crime. Another enactment armed the executive with wide powers for hunting out persons suspected of trafficking in explosive substances. The almost forgotten Regulation III of 1818, which permitted the arrest, deportation, or confinement of the accused without trial was re-discovered and put into action. 'Suspicious' correspondence was ordered to be intercepted. Politics was made taboo in schools and colleges, students being sternly forbidden to participate in any kind of boycott. Some institutions were compelled to discontinue their physical training classes. Suppression was tried almost to the limit, but the agitator and the terrorist remained unbeaten. Many parts of the province became notoriously insecure. Unescorted women could not venture out of their homes in broad daylight. Guards and drivers were unwilling to take out trains for fear of dacoits. Law was despoiled of all respect and salutary terror and even became the subject of ridicule in the bazaars. Obviously a new approach to the Indian problem was called for. Many factors in this political *malaise* determined the nature and the pace of the new moves and policies.

The electoral revolution of 1905 in Britain returned a radical House of Commons. Quite a few retired members of the Indian Civil Service fought the elections and got into the Palace of Westminster. They were intimately acquainted with India, kept in close and direct touch with leaders of the agitation, and were continuously supplied with material for embarrassing Parliamentary questions. One of them, Sir William Wedderburn, was elected Chairman of the Indian Parliamentary Committee. Another member of the group, Sir Henry Cotton, prided himself on being an 'interpreter of the wishes of the Indian people'. There were lesser luminaries who indulged in dogmatic expressions and regarded the anti-partition movement as a phase of 'national development' deserving of encouragement. They repeatedly clamoured for the reunion of the two Bengals as the only condition of bringing peace to India. The Liberal Ministers appeared to shrug their shoulders, vaguely suggesting that they were confronted, much against their wishes, with a grievous harvest sown by their predecessors. All the available evidence goes to show that the agitation derived its strength from abroad and not from within the country. A radical member of Parliament wrote to an Indian friend from London; 'Morley will yet yield; go on and agitate.' This letter found its way into the Bengal Press and clearly indicated the line of action to the agitator.[33]

The two leaders of the nascent Labour Party in Britain, Ramsay MacDonald and Kier Hardie, visited India on a self-imposed mission of peace in the midst of the storm. Their flippant utterances created a delicate situation for the Government. They were doing India under

the guidance of the National Congress leaders who arranged rousing receptions for them everywhere. After a hectic six-week tour of India, Mr MacDonald claimed to have studied Indian life at first hand, in her great industrial centres as well as in the little and out-of-the-way villages. Everywhere he had found people taking a lively interest in the progress of the Labour movement in Britain and meeting Labour members of Parliament as old and tried friends. The observation was foolish to the point of absurdity and showed up the conducted tourist. Earlier, and while yet in India, he branded this partition as an indictable offence[34] and told one of his Hindu visitors that Labour members would deny all support to the Liberal Ministry if deportees were not promptly released. Keir Hardie tended to be sensational. For the two months that he was roving in the sub-continent every minute of his time, he wrote later, was spent either 'in travelling or interviewing officials or representative men of all sections'.[35] The Pressmen of Calcutta met him daily and made bannerlines out of the details of his programme. He was incapable of weighing his words or understanding their import and effect. He described the condition of Eastern Bengal as much worse than that of Russia, and likened the 'atrocities' committed by officials (on Hindus alone), to the Turkish 'outrages' in Armenia. The gratuitous reference to Turkish enormities may have delighted the Hindus but it certainly outraged the Muslims, who paid homage to the Sultan as their spiritual suzerain. His thoughtless orations worsened Hindu-Muslim relations because he freely charged Muslims with molesting hapless Hindu widows[36] and accepted all Hindu allegations against them as proven facts. At every public meeting he shouted *Bande Matram* at the top of his voice to please the agitators. He delivered the verdict that the colonial form of self-government was best suited to India because he had found unanimous agreement among Indian peasants on this point. The Calcutta newspaper *Amrit Bazar Patrika* declared enthusiastically that God had sent Mr Keir Hardie to 'demolish the gigantic conspiracy against the Hindus'.[37] On his return to England, he proposed that the next session of the Indian National Congress should be held in London so as to command world attention for the Indian grievance.[38] Lord MacDonnel, Sir Anthony MacDonnel of earlier days, notorious for his pronounced anti-Muslim proclivities, denounced the partition as the greatest administrative blunder in India since Clive's conquest of Plassey.[39] The knowledge of British Ministers regarding India was superficial. ('The most valuable Minister is he who knows nothing about his department' is a familiar and not always unjust adage of the British Constitution.) Not sure of their ground, they were always seen to be on the defensive. The replies they made to questions asked in Parliament, in the beginning at least, indicated the possibility of the re-examination of partition. The India Secretary, the philosopher Morley, was constantly taunted by 'friends' of India for swallowing the convictions of a lifetime in sanctioning coercive measures. In an official despatch, Morley expressed his distress at the internment of Tilak and protested against heavy sentences passed on other revolutionaries. Indulging in 'plain speaking' he went on to say that some pillars of officialdom better

deserved to be deported. Such expressions of sympathy encouraged the agitators and kept the agitation alive. The Government of India had to follow the example of its betters in Whitehall. Under the most exacting emergencies they failed to maintain a balance between concession and coercion. In a notorious and recorded instance they entered into negotiations with a band of dacoits under trial through two very highly placed official intermediaries who persuaded them to plead guilty as a condition of escaping punishment. The Chief Justice and two puisne judges ratified the agreement. It was soon brought to the notice of the court that two of this batch of prisoners were already under long sentences for a similar offence, and the question arose as to how they should be dealt with. The judges declined to interfere, leaving the solution to the Government.[40]

Minto, the man on the spot, lost his nerve at the terrifying spectre of uninterrupted turbulence and advocated the sternest retribution for the revolutionary, asking to be allowed a free hand in crushing him. Morley rebuked him sharply, deprecated the doctrine of free hand as un-English, reminding him of his own undivided and unshared constitutional responsibility to the British Parliament in Indian affairs. Such phrases sounded strange in Morley's mouth, for he himself was the least constitutional Minister of the Crown in Whitehall. He loved to fill his weekly letters to the Viceroy with sound political wisdom in restrained prose and pretended to get on with him; but temperamentally the two were separated by a wide gulf. Lady Minto has complained that Morley became more autocratic as time went by and demanded information on every detail. The Viceroy grumbled against the 'ultra sensitive' Secretary and felt tormented by trying to frame every sentence of his despatches to avoid wounding Morley's feelings.[41] Differences and disparities of character and approach to problems between the Secretary and the Viceroy reduced the India policy of the British Government to a series of unsatisfactory compromises.

Lord Curzon, the Conservative party, the British Press and the Anglo-Indian community threw the entire weight of their influence against conciliatory measures. To the end of his days, Curzon loved to expatiate on the Providential nature of British dominion in India. His own rule over the Indian sub-continent had been characterized by a dictatorial control over all public affairs, but even after he had relinquished office, he almost forgot that India was no longer his responsibility, and that Britain still had a Viceroy in India. Minto's one unforgivable offence was to have succeeded him. It was beyond his understanding how 'a gentleman who only jumped hedges'—Minto was a sportsman of reputation—could fill a great position (like the Viceroyalty of India) requiring titanic talents like his own. At the time of his departure from India he had forbidden the observance of all customary courtesies due to his successor. In Britain he kept up a lively interest in India, freely communicated with favourites whom he had planted in sensitive public positions during his own regime and often obtained secret official information from them. This infraction of the Official Secrets Act, of which Curzon himself was the author, enabled him to deliver some of his most deadly attacks on the

Government's India policy from the opposition benches. He was generous in proffering unsolicited advice about the filling of administrative and advisory posts connected with India, and once went to the length of protesting against the removal of certain pictures from the Viceroy's house in Calcutta to Delhi at the time of the change of the capital. *The Times* was openly prejudiced in Curzon's favour and missed no opportunity of humiliating Minto personally and bringing his administration into disrepute. Curzon's hostility was sometimes expressed in signed articles but more often through those of a 'Press correspondent'. Unfair criticism invariably added to the Viceroy's difficulties. *The Times* counselled unrestrained counter-terrorism and observed that no repression could be too swift or too severe, declaring that 'unfailing promptitude and rigorous severity are the best weapons of the Government of India now'[42] and 'the Oriental mind is best impressed by rapid retribution'.[43] The Calcutta correspondent of this journal declared that strong measures could shatter the movement in one month, adding that the surgeon who cut the deepest affected the speediest and the most permanent cure.[44] The retired British officials from India exercised a far-reaching influence over the India Office and its environs. There were many who supported a strong policy of coercion. Their whole philosophy could be summed up in a few simple and straightforward propositions. Hardened bureaucrats as they were, they averred that there was more unrest in England than in India, that the Indian clay was an unsuitable material for the moulding of a civilized being, that no Asian could develop the moral texture of a white man, that representative institutions were incompatible with the genius of the East, and that the radical-ridden House of Commons, remote from the Indian scene, could not intelligently discuss or righteously decide the issues touching the interests of a vast dependency. The traditionally conservative British House of Lords bravely resisted all suggestions for liberalizing the system of Government in India. At times Morley had to whittle down important concessions to avoid trouble with this august body. The Tories clamoured that any magnanimity shown to India should be accompanied by a reassuring increase of the British garrison. They would have felt relieved if the disturbed condition of the country had been made an excuse for scrapping every scheme for constitutional advance.

Then there was the Indian National Congress, which now was a force to reckon with. At the beginning of his Indian career, Minto was impressed with some aspects of its campaign, but he was soon disillusioned, growing suspicious of the sincerity of its declared aims, the reliability of its foremost spokesmen, and the suitability for India of the insistently demanded Western political patterns.[45] He also chafed at its leaders being overrated in England. Yet he could not turn a blind eye to the signs of the times for the change in the air had to be recognized. After the purge of 1907, the Congress was a body of moderates. The Government, having washed their hands of the extremists a long time ago, realized that all would be lost if the moderates were driven to extremes. Consequently, both Minto and

Morley were anxious to win over the politically moderate sections of the educated classes. For this reason, Morley's appeals were addressed to 'temperate' and 'reflective' minds. The situation singularly added to the bargaining power of the Congress. The Government wavered in its opinions and actions, seeming at one time to be swayed by sympathy and at another by apprehension. The policy which finally emerged from the interplay of these forces, detailed above, was built round four points.

The first point envisaged the maintenance of partition. The revolutionary was to be curbed, the extremist ignored and the moderate conciliated. The Liberal party, while in opposition, had shown undisguised and marked hostility to the Curzon administration. Putting a wishful construction on the capacious phraseology of a private conversation, some knowledgable quarters both in India and England had imputed to Morley the promise to undo the partition as soon as an electoral victory put the Liberals into office and power. That is why the earlier months of his tenure at India Office were marked by a visible abatement of agitation, in the eager expectation of its reversal. But the Secretary was quick in forming his judgement on the merits of the Bengal grievance. He publicly declared partition to be a settled fact. But this was just one aspect of his work, for appeasement of the disgruntled elements was the other. Mere repression was out of the question. Morley did not always magnify revolutionary excesses, nor did he believe that the discovery of a secret association necessarily meant a political earthquake. He fell in easily with Minto's suggestion of making the Government of India broad-based and more representative. At a later stage, Morley's admirers sought to create an impression that Minto had little to do with what followed and that he was only dutifully carrying out the Secretary's orders. The proposals for constitutional reform (or simply 'Reforms') were formulated and put forward by the Viceroy. Morley didnot reactfavourably, doubting their value. But Minto's logic dispelled his misgivings and he lent the scheme his vigorous and eloquent support. The plan envisaged the democratization and enlargement of the existing legislative councils, greater freedom of budgetary discussions and larger opportunities for interpellations. Nevertheless, the councils were to be confined to an advisory role. The executive branch of the Government was to be put beyond their control. Correspondence and discussions about the details of the scheme lasted for more than three years (1906-09). The philosopher and historian in Morley had no illusions about the feasibility of Parliamentary democracy in India. When a critic asserted in Parliament that whatever was good in the way of self-government for Canada must also be equally good for India, Morley lost patience and characterized the proposition as 'the grossest sophism'. He dwelt at length on the unsuitability of the Candian fur coat for the tropical climate and said that it was merely asking for the moon, which he could not give unless he knew of the conditions prevailing there. Nor was he convinced that conditions for the successful working of democratic institutions could be produced to order; many a weary step would have to be taken before a mass (like the Indians) could be turned into a

true political personality. All that he could do was to infuse the spirit of British institutions into the Indian administrative system without relaxing the reality of British control. Opponents decried it as an attempt to make British watches keep time in two longitudes at once. To this illogical and artificial arrangement Morley gave the enigmatic and self-neutralizing name of constitutional autocracy.

The second feature of the reform scheme, namely, the proposal to include an Indian in the supreme executive, occasioned an embittered debate. This idea, again, occurred to Minto who first referred to it as a mere possibility. Morley, again, received it coldly but later, as was his wont, was reconciled to it, calling it the first step in a dangerous journey and forecasting a wild reception for it. His diffidence was well grounded. All persons and institutions that mattered, the King, the India Council, the Viceregal Council, and Lord Kitchener, expressed emphatic dissent. The prospect of having to share the secrets of the Empire with a member of the subject race was dreadful. The fury of the Anglo-Indian tribe recalled the virulence of the Ilbert Bill days. Morley, who 'hated to drive in the dark', felt the ground slipping from under his feet and wavered under the onslaught of criticism. His radical impulses having failed him in the crisis, he decided to shelve the issue and requested Minto to keep a secret of his *volte face*. But for Minto there was no going back. He plodded on and his persistence won the day. However, the opposition of the Civil Service was overcome by the assignment to the Indian member of the non-administrative portfolio of Law, which members of that freemasonary were not qualified to hold.

The third feature recognized the position of the Princes in this scheme. Under British rule Princely independence had been curbed by degrees. The Princes were immensely rich, ambitious and shrewd, but terror-sticken. The Indian Government had deliberately put them out of countenance. Humiliations were visited on them constantly and lightly, and no Prince, however high or mighty, was asked to a Viceregal dinner. It was also considered impudent for him to take his seat on the banquet table along with the Viceroy, even when he himself was the host. A pamphlet written by a high military officer and published in 1875 had pointed to the error of keeping the Princes at a distance and treating them as negative quantities. It suggested that Indian chiefs should be utilized as a support, rather than as a source of embarassment, to the British power in India; but the exhortation was unheeded. So long as its administrative absolutism was unchallenged, the Government could afford to do without friends, but in the impossible situation created by the anti-partition agitation and its resultant movement of *Swadeshi* and terrorism, it began to look round for allies. Princely order was the first to be found in this search. Minto endeavoured to mitigate official prudery towards it, set aside many debasing social conventions and began to communicate directly with Princes on the subject of political unrest, suggesting common action in the face of 'common danger'. Like many thinking observers who preceded him, Minto was appalled at the utter absence of social intercourse between the rulers and the ruled. This gulf was spot-

lighted and lamented by almost every writer of consequence on contemporary politics. The burden of the complaint was that the Englishman's racial arrogance was abnormal and that he was too rough to be agreeable. Mohammad Ali, who could not then be counted among the uncharitable critics of British rule, described the different stages in this development thus: 'Conquest had bred racial pride, racial pride had led to aloofness, aloofness to ignorance, and ignorance to contempt.'

Ironically enough, the members of the ruling race did not regard the distance between Indians and themselves as a source of weakness, but maintained it as their best strength. Many intellectuals of moderate views were, therefore, driven to the belief that the Indian problem was essentially a social one, and that political difficulties could not be removed as long as social barriers stood intact. A typical representative of this class observed; 'the scorching heat of one hundred and fifty Indian summers had not thawed the icy perceptibility of the Briton and that the remedy lay more in dinners than in debates and clubs not councils.'[46] When Curzon sought to belittle the dimensions of the unrest by calling it merely skin-deep, Mohammad Ali accepted the phrase, of course interpreting it in his own way. To break the proverbial vicious circle and to enable the rulers to get in touch with the people, or at least their betters, the Viceroy canvassed the idea of a joint club. But the futility of the device was patent. The British were birds of passage in the country with no permanent affections or attachments. It was hard to enlist their sympathies in a cause which threatened to lower their social status by requiring them to mix with the subject race. A few Englishmen who thought over the problem admitted the inflexibility of their own compatriots but exonerated themselves by blaming the Indian social system which precluded close contact with foreigners. However, one joint club actually began to function in Calcutta. But race prejudices were too firmly entrenched to be seriously affected by a single club and the matter was not pursued further. The political problem remained untackled on the social front. It has been stated on good authority that whatever success the Indian National Congress, at any stage, achieved among Muslims was the outcome of the bad and overbearing manners of the ruling race.

Finally, we find an anxious attempt being made to evolve a new system of ideas to fight the prevalent ones. This probably had its origin in Morison's advice tendered to the India Secretary to keep the agitation under the extinguisher, ideas must be opposed by ideas and 'you won't keep the younger generation away from the Congress unless you have another programme and another set of ideas to set up against theirs.' Did this advice refer to Muslims? In part at least. Mohammad Ali has recorded that the timid and somewhat crude political activity visible among Muslims in these years was carried on with Government approval and encouragement. In any case its volume was small and its influence limited. But no one in authority seems to have considered the necessity, or even the desirability, of the Government organizing its own public relations. It was content, for the time being, to subsidize a newspaper, called the *Indian Mirror* to assist in the dissemination of what

it called 'accurate information', and the formation of what it believed to be sober opinions. Compared to the powerful Calcutta Press this journal was as good as non-existent.

Further speculation on the causes of unrest passed into a discussion of the educational system of India, or the want of a system, as some preferred to call it.[47] A long line of writers beginning from the late seventies of the nineteenth century had tried to establish a direct and causal connection between the progress of Western education and the growth of political agitation. Those publicists and thinkers who adopted this view came to the conclusion that the continuance of British rule depended very much upon the right solution of the educational problem. They held that the poor condition of education could be attributed to schools and colleges being manned by socially isolated and ill-paid staff. Every teacher was a problem in himself. He was primarily a politician. The educational effort of the Government, they argued, was merely restricted to the communication of academic knowledge tested by examinations; it did not aim at the formation of character; its purely secular character destroyed respect for authority and produced irreverence. The correspondent of *The Times* who carried out an on-the-spot investigation drew a lurid picture of the habits and surroundings of the average student in Calcutta, his reliance on cramming, his ignorance of the importance of physical exercise and his devouring zest for political campaigns. He attacked the entire system and advocated state education throughout. The desired objective of raising loyal citizens, in his opinion, could only be achieved if educational facilities at all stages were provided by the state and if religious education were somehow woven into this system of education. He even elaborated an educational scheme of his own: 'as many as possible of the infinitely diverse phases of religious belief in India should be taught in schools and colleges by men whom Government choose and approve.' The plan was opposed on the grounds that there would be no homogeneity of religious atmosphere in a college where separate religious instructions would be imparted. The value of the revival of religious sentiment to counteract the agitation and terrorism was doubtful. The literary exponents of terrorism as well as its active disciples claimed to derive the fundamentals of their creed directly from the teaching of Hindu scriptures. The religious doctrines used to foster revolution could not easily lend themselves to a directly opposite end. The remedy was worse then the disease itself.

7

WHILE THE agitation against partition continued, it was generally understood that the British Government contemplated reconstitution of the existing legislatures on a more representative basis. Muslims were dubious about this scheme.

So far the elective system had been tried in the country in a very limited sphere and Muslim experience of elections had not been very happy. In 1883, Sayyid Ahmad had opposed the introduction of the Western electoral system to the country as detrimental to Muslim

interests. In 1892, he submitted an elaborate memorandum to the Government to the effect that wherever elections had enabled a few Muslims to get into public bodies, they owed their success to a predominantly non-Muslim electorate and their influence was therefore not felt within their own country. The Aga Khan[48] has stated that whenever the Indian National Congress was compelled to put a few Muslims in representative offices, its choice invariably fell on men of mediocre ability.[49]

Therefore, it was not a clique of reactionary politicians of non-Indian origin[50] who waited on Governor-General Minto in 1906 to demand separate electorates for the Muslim community, but a group of cautious elders struggling to prevent the disintegration of the community. In doing so they were also consciously asserting a separate Muslim nationality. Here is the inside story of the deputation as narrated by Sayyid Tufail Ahmad, the author of the well-known Urdu book *Mussalmanon Ka Raushan Mustaqbil.*

When the reform scheme was being thrashed out by a committee of the Viceroy's council, Haji Muhammad Ismail Khan of Aligarh addressed a communication to Mehdi Ali from Naini Tal, strongly suggesting an immediate move for the protection of Muslim interests under the new dispensation. The subject was also generally engaging the attention of the Muslim intelligentsia. Mr Archbold, the Principal, of M.A.O. College, was spending his long vacation at Simla and was in touch with high Government officials. He talked over the subject of the proposed deputation with the private secretary to the Viceroy and acquainted Mehdi Ali with the outcome of this interview. His letter which was circulated among the intended deputationists read:

Colonel Dunlop Smith (private Secretary to the Viceroy) writes to inform that the Viceroy is prepared to receive the Muslim deputation and directs that a formal application be made in this behalf. The following considerations should be kept in mind:

First: the application. The application needs to be signed by just a few recognized leaders of the community even if they have not been elected by a representative organization.

Second: composition of the deputation. This should include representatives of the community from all provinces.

Third: contents of the representation. The address should reiterate the community's loyalist creed, thank the Viceroy for the proposed advance towards self-government, express apprehensions about the future of the Muslim minority under a 'democratic' system, press for adequate representation for Muslims in legislatures either through nomination or by extending the privilege of representation to religious communities and express the view that in a country like India landed interests need to be given special weightage.

Personally, I believe it to be wise for Muslims to make a demand for nomination rather than election. Elections will not give them their due share. I do not wish to be openly associated with all this and prefer to stay behind the scene. The initiative should come from you. I shall gladly render whatever assistance I can. I can draft the address or

suggest suitable amendments if it is proposed to have it prepared in Bombay. I know the art of drawing up well-worded petitions. No time should be lost if the move is to be effective.[51]

A whole legend has grown up round this document. Its contents do not reveal anything new or startling. All these ideas and observations are repeated in the speeches, writings and newspaper articles by the Aligarh school of politics. Mr Archbold's coaching was superfluous. It was not he who pointed out the injurious effects of elections to the Muslims, they were already aware of them. It is doubtful if the address would have been any different if Archbold had withheld his advice.

The draft of the address, which was written by Mr Bilgrami, was approved by a meeting at Lucknow. Probably no one cared to secure Archbold's approval for its contents. And finally Archbold's pointed suggestion to ask for nomination, instead of elections was ignored. Archbold's suggestion to Mehdi Ali that 'that initiative should come from you' makes strange reading, because the first person to make a move in the matter was Haji Muhammad Ismail Khan, one of the leaders of the Aligarh movement. In fact all that Archbold did was to get in touch with the private secretary to the Viceroy and settle the preliminaries of the deputation. He wrote back telling them that the Viceroy was prepared to listen to their grievances and possibly redress them. It was an opportune moment and they took advantage of it. None of these arrangements were secret. The whole community was taking a deep but quiet interest in the matter.

The deputation, consisting of seventy members, and led by the Aga Khan, waited on the Viceroy on 1 October 1906, and was received in the Viceregal ballroom. The long address read by the Aga Khan said, among other things, that the position of the Muslim community should not be estimated on its numerical strength alone, but in terms of its political importance and the service it had rendered to the Empire. He also pointed out that the representative institutions of the West were inappropriate and inadequate for India and their application raised difficult problems, that it was necessary to proceed in this uncharted field with the utmost care and that in whatever sphere (municipal or provincial) it was intended to introduce or extend the electoral system, the Muslims should be represented as a community.

The Viceroy concurred with these propositions and stated in reply that any electoral representation in India would be deemed a mischievous failure which aimed at granting personal enfranchisement regardless of the beliefs and traditions of the communities composing the population of this sub-continent. He further said, 'the great mass of the people of India have no knowledge of representative institutions and the Mohammadan community may rest assured that their political rights and interests as a community will be safeguarded by any administrative reorganisation with which I am concerned.'[52]

The acceptance of the deputation's demand proved to be a turning point in the history of the sub-continent. Its final and inevitable con-

sequence was the partition of 1947. It is appropriate, therefore, to offer a few comments in retrospect.

The Hindu press of Calcutta subsequently started a smear campaign against the sponsors of this deputation which only served to consolidate the Muslims. Ever since then, controversy has centred round separate electorates. All attempts to find a mutually acceptable alternative proved abortive, and when in 1916 the representatives of the two communities sat down to settle their outstanding differences, separate electorates constituted the basis of adjustment.

The Muslim leadership of 1906 was firmly convinced of the justice of its cause. Even some Hindu leaders, like Gokhale, averred that Muslim apprehensions regarding the future were not to be derided. If the Hindus had been a minority, they would have reacted in a similar manner.

While the Muslims had demanded what they believed to be their due, Minto accepted this claim on the basis of expediency. Obviously, the two were actuated by different motives. The Muslims wanted to preserve their communal identity, while Minto was anxious to pull them out of political discontent.

The suggestion often made, and uncritically accepted, that the British administration in India systematically pursued pro-Muslim policies is untenable. No imperialism is conscience-stricken. The British may have been partial to Muslims (or for that matter to one community or the other) here and there, but they never hesitated to reverse their plans when it suited their interests.

Muhammad Ali, who accompanied the deputation and should have known better, called it a 'command performance' in his presidential address to the Coconada Congress of 1923. This may be a piece of brilliant rather than accurate phrase-making, for in that very context he also says: 'From whatever source the inspiration may have proceeded there is no doubt that the Muslim cause was this time properly advocated. In the common territorial elections the Muslims had certainly not succeeded in securing anything like adequate or real representation.'[53] Even if the deputation was a command performance, the deputations did not make a dictated demand. They got an opportunity to voice a grievance from which they had suffered for long.

Hindu writers usually refer to the Simla deputation with contempt, for they saw it as just one of the many symptoms of the anti-national and unpatriotic proclivities of the Indian Muslims. Mr Lal Bahadur typifies this attitude when he says 'the evidence in this respect (i.e. of its being a command performance) is so overwhelming that any attempt at its refutation would be altogether useless.'[54] This overwhelming evidence adduced by him consists, first, of Archbold's letter to Mehdi Ali noticed earlier; secondly, Archbold's letter written to an unnamed correspondent saying that he had taken a leading part in the whole affair, that he was in possession of much interesting and relevant correspondence and that it was not his place to publish what he remembered about it; and thirdly the fact that Archbold was at Simla when the College was in session.

Archbold's letter to Mehdi Ali has been examined already. His own

testimony about his great role in the transaction and his reluctance to speak on the subject does not justify the verdict that Lal Bahadur has based on undisclosed evidence. Moreover, Archbold's criticism of Aligarh leadership may have been prejudiced for the circumstances in which he was made to leave Aligarh were far from flattering, and this may have resulted in his later references to the institution and its associates being oblique and uncomplimentary. Finally, if he had been acquainted with Aligarh and its affairs, he would have realized that Aligarh had its long vacation in the rainy season and that it was usual for Principals of M.A.O. College to spend this period at Simla.

A close study of the whole affair suggests that the deputation represented the early stirring of a national consciousness. It forestalled and, therefore, weakened the conflict between the Muslims and the Government which actually developed after 1911. In that case the Muslims might well have launched a struggle on their own initiative. In this particular instance, success was achieved before the struggle had started and this created the unfortunate impression that the Government was fighting the political battle on behalf of the Muslims. The idea was assiduously propagated by the Hindu Press and, tragically enough, some important sections of the Muslims could not rid themselves of such a comforting and reassuring notion.

8

EVEN WHEN Western education was making rapid strides among the Muslims of India, it did not progress in the same proportion as it had done among the Hindus. This was due to a variety of causes, the chief among them being the importance the community attached to the cultivation of some part of its own learning. The process of Muslim disintegration, which gained momentum after the Mutiny and continued for over three quarters of a century, had reduced Muslim society to a congeries of cliques and factions with conflicting aims and ambitions. With a few individual exceptions it had, as a community, no clear conception of its needs and requirements and was unable to exercise a corporate influence on those in authority. That is why it fell into a state of comparative subordination. It sounds paradoxical, nevertheless it is true, that with the progress of education the Muslims lost ground politically. They fell victims to an absolute apathy, seeking justification in a pathetic dependence on the benevolence of the Government. Abortive attempts to form some sort of political organization have been noticed elsewhere. But when the demand for separate electorates had been conceded, the need for consolidation was felt more keenly. Some sections of Muslim leadership feared, a fear which was by no means imaginary, that the pledge given by Minto would not be honoured by the Liberal ministry. Ameer Ali, who was in close touch with the forces governing the drift of the Indian policies of the British Government, clearly perceived the struggle that lay ahead and expressed the opinion that ultimate success could not be achieved without a determined effort. To organize that effort and to ensure the advantages of a separate electorate, he suggested the foundation of a

central organization in a place like Aligarh which focussed the intellectual life of the community.[55] This advice had the desired effort. In November 1906, Khwaja Salim Ullah of Dacca sent round a circular proposing the establishment of a political party, under the name of the All-India Muslim Confederacy for the protection and advancement of Muslim interests, combatting the growing influence of the Indian National Congress, and encouraging the Muslims of talent to enter public life. It added that the community had, thus far, acted as an apparently unconcerned and mute spectator of the Indian political drama and that the time had come for open and frank discussions. It ended by asking all those who intended attending the next session of the Mohammadan Educational Conference to come prepared to discuss the scheme at a special sitting.

The annual session of this Conference was held in the last week of 1906 at Dacca, the capital of the newly created province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. It was attended by some three thousand delegates and was, by common consent, 'the most representative ever' gathering of Muslim India. The day set apart by the Conference to discuss Khwaja Salim Ullah's proposal was 30 December. For the first time in its twenty years of existence, the Conference lifted its traditional ban on political discussions. Khwaja Salim Ullah prefaced his motion with the following observations:

> We are today prepared to enter on a political career as a community which the spirit of the times impels us to do. A more active propaganda, a more candid statement of our needs and aspirations, and the giving of a more public and representative character to our political association are more necessary today than was the case in 1893 . . . . . no amount of candour shall rob us of our traditional courtesy. Those interests which we have in common with other communities will be advanced by us in common with them, and those additional interests which are exclusively ours will be advanced exclusively by us. The materials have for a long time been ready, but now shall we be able to rear from them the mighty fabric of a united people . . . . . the spirit of the League will be the spirit of our poet who said: 'I am a liberal and my motto is: I am at enmity with no one'.[56]

After some discussion the resolution to establish a political party was adopted unanimously and the organization was named the All-India Muslim League, instead of Confederacy, as contemplated in the original proposal. Its objects, as formulated by the meeting, were: first to inculcate among Muslims a feeling of loyalty to the Government and to disabuse their minds of misunderstandings and misconceptions arising out of its action and intentions; secondly to protect and advance the political rights and interests of the Muslims of India and to represent to the Government, from time to time, their needs and aspirations and finally to prevent the growth of ill-will between Muslims and other nationalities without prejudice to its own purposes.

A strong provisional committee was formed to complete the preliminaries, and Mehdi Ali and Mushtaq Husain, the two outstanding

lieutenants of Sayyid Ahmad, unrivalled for their influence and intellectual capacity, were appointed joint secretaries. The committee was charged with the framing of a constituuion and getting the draft approved by the parent body. The central office of the League was located at Aligarh and the Aga Khan was voted as the president. One of the resolutions passed at its very first meeting endorsed the partition of Bengal and condemned the agitation against it. It took about two years to put an agreed constitution into shape. The 'Rubicon' was crossed, Muslim India emerging out of the shade of retirement into the political arena. But the new platform was practically monopolized by those very persons who had persistently counselled total abstention from politics during the last quarter of a century. New policies involving a radical breach with the past are apt to lose their dynamism at the hands of established figures. It took the League quite some time to recover from this political anaemia.

A London branch of the Muslim League was inaugurated in May 1908. To the three objectives of the organization in India, the London branch added a fourth one, namely, 'to bring the Muslims so far as possible into touch with the leaders of thought in England.' How far the London League was able to implement this part of its intentions is not known. Addressing the inaugural meeting, the President, Ameer Ali, explained that his motto for the last forty years had been that 'united India should be the watchward of our progress', but it was 'impossible for them to merge their separate communal existence in that of any other nationality or to strive for the attainment of their ideals under the aegis of any organization other than their own. Diversity of religion and ethical standards make the absolute fusion of races and peoples of India impracticable.'

This was by no means a heroic beginning. The founders of the League were a set of sure-footed and circumspect men with modest objectives. It is natural at this distance of time to be critical about the unnecessarily complimentary, at times panegyrical, references to the alien Government. Protestations of loyalty could be heard equally loudly from almost every political platform including that of the Indian National Congress. Besides, the constitution of the League was far from democratic. Its membership was open to the privileged class and not to the masses. For many years it was accused of being a coterie of arm-chair politicians with a frankly sectional appeal. Probably politics, in its infancy, is bound to be an affair of salons and drawing rooms. The fact is not without significance that just as the National Congress came into existence nearly thirty years after the establishment of the earliest seats of Western learning in the sub-continent (i.e. the Universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras) which had primarily benefited the Hindu youth, the Muslim League was founded about as many years after the establishment of the M.A.O. College which was meant to initiate the rising Muslim generation into Western thought.

9

THE SCHEME of reforms was ultimately embodied in an Act of the

British Parliament passed in 1909. The long delay had created the impression that the reforms were extorted rather than granted. Morley emphasized their transient character by insisting that they were only a mile-post in the normal march of history. But, as was expected, they failed to appease the extremists who branded them as a mock constitution, amounting to the British attempt to plough their own field with our heifer. But for a time the changes had a soothing effect on the moderates. Gokhale called them a faint streak of a new dawn and said that the administration which was previously carried on entirely in the dark, and behind the backs of the people, was brought into the light of the day and under the scrutiny of public discussion. Legislators could now criticize the actions of the executive, elicit information by means of questions and express their views by moving resolutions. The inclusion of Indians in the councils of the India Secretary and the Viceroy gave them access to places where ultimate decisions were made, and from which they had been, so far, excluded. In short, the reforms established a sort of consultative government. But in their working they proved to be anomalous. Restricted electorates created pocket constituencies and reduced the elections to a mere farce. Kharapade, Tilak's right hand man, for instance, won an election by eight votes to six. Qualifications of voters, as well as candidates, varied from province to province. In view of the scattered nature of the electorates and the wide areas of electoral districts, ballot papers were often sent to the electors by post. When the Reforms were enforced Morley expressed the hope that they would establish some stability for twenty or possibly thirty years. But this was a palpable error of judgement. The effect of the reforms was fleeting. While in some quarters the agitation did not cease, in others it was soon resumed. Morley began to fret that he had not received a word of thanks from anybody for bringing about the most important constitutional changes for the last fifty years. It was possible to sympathize with him, but it was not difficult to understand the reasons.

The Indian Muslim deputation, popularly called the Simla deputation, that had waited on Minto on 1 October 1906, to demand more equitable representation for the Muslim community, had elicited a firm and unqualified affirmative. The deputationists returned satisfied. It has been often suggested that this was a trumped up demand and that the deputation had been pre-arranged and punctiliously tutored in advance. It solicited a favour and the favour was granted without much ado, but this is an entirely misleading view. A careful study of the actual course of events reveals that from the point of its communication to its final redemption the pledge went through some very critical stages. The forces pulling in the opposite direction worked sometimes openly but more often underground. A sizeable radical vote in the House of Commons, under the influence of the Indian National Congress leaders, was always ready to oppose their Government over the Indian issue. Consequently, the cabinet attitude was marked by hesitations, vagueness and withdrawals. By degrees it became clear that the British Government was deliberately trying to wriggle out of the Viceregal commitment.

In admitting the Muslim claim Minto did not go into detail nor did he indicate the means by which separate Muslim representation could be dovetailed into the general electoral scheme. The assurance was renewed by the Central Government in a circular letter addressed to local Governments, which quoted the arguments of the deputation with approval and laid special stress on Minto's observations about the 'mischief of a personal enfranchisement regardless of the beliefs and traditions of the communities composing the population'. All local Governments accepted the principle. A scheme based on their recommendations was submitted to London. It was at this juncture that difficulties began. For quite some time, Morley made no move, and then as if by legerdemain he came out with an alternative plan, which was directly contrary to the one received from India. Instead of constituting separate electoral colleges for the two communities, it provided for the election of representatives of both communities by a body of electors drawn from all classes of the population resident within what may be roughly called territorially demarcated constitutencies. Muslim leaders were taken aback at this development which was entirely different from what they had been led to expect. They pointed out that Muslim representation, as envisaged by Minto, meant the election of Muslim representatives by Muslim voters alone, whereas the Morley proposals provided for the election of Muslim representatives by mixed bodies of Hindu and Muslim voters in which the electoral machinery was likely to be controlled at every stage by a non-Muslim majority. This procedure, they apprehended, would make Muslim representation illusory, as Muslim representatives would be elected by the electoral college as a whole, and not exclusively by its Muslim members. This was a retraction of Minto's pledge. Experience had shown that the type of Muslim who secured Hindu support, did so by virtue of his utility to Hindu interests.[57] It was infinitely better for the community to retire from the scene, because a Muslim nominee of a Hindu majority would often do more harm to Muslim interests than the majority itself. When the suggestion was made from official quarters that anomalies resulting from elections could be corrected by a system of nomination, it was instantly repudiated as branding the community with political inferiority and making room for men by whom it did not desire to be represented.[58]

A deputation of the All-India Muslim League, led by Ameer Ali, waited on Morley to demand 'adequate, real and genuine' representation for Muslims. Morley was cautious and was not explicit, but suave and receptive. He declared that separate Muslim electorates were not necessarily beyond the scope of his offer: it might be possible to have electoral colleges, original as well as intermediary, exclusively composed of Muslims.[59] He also brought into the discussion the extraordinary difficulty of adjusting the representation of communities to their numerical strength, holding that legislatures were meant to represent a true balance of social forces and needs and that their constitution could not be based on maxims and formulae taken from the text books of algebra, arithmetic, geometry, or logic. Wise as these

remarks were, they were vague and indefinite, holding out no promise. While Muslim leaders anxiously waited for the final verdict on the issue, two members of the Government, one in Britain and the other in India, made statements deprecating the whole idea of separate Muslim representation.[60] The Muslims protested vigorously and Ameer Ali complained that the community was being trifled with and did not know where it stood; if their demands were not met, the Muslims might isolate themselves. At last Morley's considered decision was given in the course of his speech during the second reading of the India Bill in the House of Lords, wherein he declared that the Muslim demand was to be met in full.[61] The substance of this concession, as we shall see in a moment, was not as generous as it sounded. What Morley called meeting the Muslim demand in full fell far short of meeting it half-way. This unequivocal declaration appeared to close the matter, but this was not yet the end. The 'India' members of the House of Commons made a lightning move to torpedo the undertaking by moving an amendment. Again the Government benches wavered and began to search for fresh excuses to justify a new somersault. This time the vacillation was shared by the Viceroy who had stood by his word till then. But now Morley was resolute; it was finally settled to maintain separate electoral registers and institute separate electoral colleges for the Hindus and the Muslims. A few seats were left open to be contested by candidates belonging to either community. Minto expressed the hope that the arrangement would make it possible for the Muslims to succeed with mixed electorates and secure more than their due share of representation. Ameer Ali publicly dissented, pointing out that this did not depend upon the good wishes of the Viceroy but would be contingent upon the good wishes of the majority of the mixed electorates, adding that in any case, it was futile to expect the Hindus to support a Muslim acceptable to his own community.[62] It is also to be noted that the pledge of 1906 was interpreted as applying to legislatures only. No separate registers were maintained for other elective offices, such as those in the municipalities.

The reforms were obviously a concession to Hindu sentiment. The correspondent of the *Times* stated that when the scheme was first enunciated, the Hindus looked upon it as a step towards the consolidation and concentration of their own political power. As the majority, they were assured of a dominant position under the coming constitution and welcomed it with exuberance. But when the principle of separate electorates was accepted in the form desired by the Muslims, their attitude was reversed.[63] They felt that the essence of reforms had slipped out of their grasp. This realization resulted in a storm of impetuousity. Morley's forecast that separate electorates would act as a barrier to the Muslims being dragged along to the goal of Hindu nationalism proved correct. Bengali Hindus were the first to organize an impassioned protest against autonomy in Muslim franchise. They questioned the desirability of special safeguards for the Muslim community when it was unfit for the exercise of power; repeatedly averred that separate electorates clashed with the basic idea of representative government; that it had been devised merely to create a counterpoise to the edu-

cated classes, that it would bring into councils Muslims committed to anti-Hindu politics; that the reforms discriminated against intellectuals; and that the educated classes alone were fitted for 'political life and its highly intellectual contests'. It was also proclaimed that the educated community who had fought for the reforms, would be reduced to an insignificant position.[64] On this latter point, the correspondent of *The Times*, who had the curiosity to go into the relevant figures, discovered that out of a total of 284 seats in all the legislatures only 18 were definitely allotted to the Muslims and that the educated classes (i.e. the Hindus) were likely to capture at least 100 seats.[65] Another striking instance of the so-called preferential treatment meted out to the Muslims was afforded by the 'rearranged' province of Bengal[66], in which the Muslims constituted 52 per cent of the population. Under the rules framed by the Government, the Muslims were given 5 seats through separate electorates and could look forward to the very distant chance of returning some more Muslims through mixed electorates. The result was that throughout the life of the Minto-Morley Councils there were only 6 elected Muslim members as against 17 Hindu and 5 European elected members. With the one rare exception of a powerful Muslim landlord, the Muslims never succeeded in capturing a single seat in the joint electorates. This was what Morley had called meeting the Muslim demand in full and assuring them a number of seats in excess of their numerical strength. The benefit of special constituencies for Muslims, however, was not extended to the Punjab and the Central Provinces, as they were imagined to be sufficiently numerous in the former and negligible in the latter.

Obviously, the real basis of the Hindu complaint was not their own exclusion, but the very certain inclusion of Muslims. When King George V came to India in 1911, many Hindu organizations petitioned against the reforms as giving favoured treatment to the Muslims. Hindu papers wrote that the Muslims were traitors, that their loyalty to the Government was only a mask, that they bore no affection to Britain, and that they were in league with Egyptian seditionists.[67] About the same time, the special correspondent of *The Times*, Mr (later Sir Valentine) Chirol, was told by a Muslim friend that Tilak and his school in Poona, as well as the Hindu nationalists of the Punjab and Bengal, were heard openly talking about the expulsion of the Muslims from India, as had been done in Spain several centuries back. Sir Walter Lawrence, who had served on the personal staff of Viceroy Curzon, speaks thus of the feelings of a Hindu ruling prince, Maharaja Sir Pertab Singh of Idar, towards the Muslims:

> Tolerant as he was, he hated Muslims. But I never realized the depths of his hatred till I was leaving India. Sir Pertab had come up to Simla to be present at a farewell dinner Lord Curzon gave to my wife and myself the night before we left, and after dinner Sir Pertab and I sat up till two in the morning, talking of his hopes and ambitions, and one of his ambitions was to annihilate the Muslim people in India. I deprecated this prejudice and mentioned Muslim friends known to both of us. 'Yes' he said, 'I like them, too, but very much

liking them dead'. 'I have often thought of this conversation. One may know Indians for years and suddenly a time comes and they open their hearts and reveal what is in them. Sir Pertab, a good Hindu and Rajput as he was, had travelled and rubbed shoulders with men of all countries. He knew the English well; he had met many nationalities—he had a kind of cosmopolitan civilization. But down in his generous heart dwelt this ineradicable hatred of the Muslims.[68]

III

THE YEARS OF TRANSITION

A stormy period—The annulment of partition—The Muslim University movement—The Cawnpore mosque—Turkey in travail—The new orientation in Muslim politics

1

THE STORMY years, 1911-14, represent a turning point in the history of Muslim India, the causes of which are to be found, for the most part, in the happenings abroad, particularly in the recurring crises in the Ottoman dominions in South-Eastern Europe and the Middle East. The Indian Muslims felt irritated and aggrieved at the growing paralysis of the Turkish power. Constantinople was a sacred name to them, for the Porte wielded the sceptre of the Prophet in their eyes. The drift of affairs in other parts of the Muslim world was just as exasperating. Persia was being strangled at the altar of the Anglo-Russian Convention; while Russia was consummating her ambitions, Britain played second fiddle. Feeling was also embittered over the bombing of Meshed. Italy launched her adventure in Tripoli in 1911, and a few months later the very existence of Turkey was imperilled by the Bulgarian revolt. The course of British foreign policy gave acute cause for concern because Muslims were being ill-treated in their homelands with the apparent connivance of Britain. The few remaining Muslim states were swiftly suffering losses of territories and prestige. Muslim newspapers carried extensive details of the woes of the Muslim peoples and of the 'designs' of Christendom on the world of Islam. They constantly emphasized the necessity of helping the Turk, and the Muslim obligation of uniting in defence of the faith. In these years a good deal was said and written about Pan-Islamism, a term which came into prominence in the days of the Balkan wars. About fifty years old at this time, Pan-Islamism was essentially a social and a political movement aiming at the uplift of the Muslims and at a closer union between them. Many Western writers made a bogey of it and represented it as a sinister and organized conspiracy against the West. The British Press was very caustic about the Muslim world and its affairs. Professor Vembery protested against its tone and wrote to *The Times* that Muslim-baiting was unnecessary, for it merely added spite to a relentless enmity of long-standing.[1] These external grievances of Indian Muslims had caused deep stirrings which were aggravated by humiliating developments, described later, within the country. These accumulated frustrations encouraged a violent reaction against the political inertia of the last fifty years. Britain, formerly regarded as friendly, came now to be viewed as the arch foe of the world of Islam. The community was, by degrees, alienated from the Government, and began to drift into political agitation and extremism.

Some Hindu newspapers fully exploited the situation and helped to widen the breach. Muslim disaffection brought about a temporary concord between the Indian 'Nationalist' movement and Indian Islam. The crisis also ushered in what looked like an era of religious awakening among the Muslims.

2

THE ESTRANGEMENT between the Muslims and the Government began in 1911 when at the Delhi coronation durbar on 12 December, King George V announced the revocation of Curzon's partition of Bengal. It was not difficult to see that this step was an abject surrender to militant Hindu opinion. It will be recalled that this partition was proposed by the Viceroy and sanctioned by the Secretary of State. It was apparently accepted by the successors of both, and was held to be inviolable. The virulence of the opposition was dying down. It was observed at the end of 1910 that the situation in Bengal was easier. Lawlessness had subsided and passions had cooled down, while demonstrations had largely disappeared. The anti-partition leaders and their adherents, weary of the protracted struggle, had given up all hope and what remained of the agitation could not have endured much longer. Earlier in the same year, a Bengali Hindu attempted to raise the issue afresh in the Legislative Council, but his attempt failed. He himself agreed to withdraw the motion. Surendranath Banerjea, who was often seen in the forefront of wailing processions and demonstrations, was also seemingly reconciled when he wrote in his journal, the *Bengalee*, 'We indeed recognize the fact that this partition has come to stay, and we are not anxious to upset it . . .'.[2] By all accounts the agitation was dying out.

Let us return to the background of the Royal visit. In 1911 King George V came to the Indian sub-continent to announce in person his assumption of the Imperial throne. For a reigning monarch to travel all the way to a distant dependency merely to announce his coronation was altogether unprecedented in the history of British rule in India. The idea originated with the King himself, but his Ministers thought that the proposal was inopportune and tried to dissuade him. They reasoned that there were dangers of terrorist plots and apprehensions about the safety of his person. The country was faced with famine conditions, and Muslim feeling was acute on account of the Italo-Turkish war. But the King brushed aside all objections and preparations were completed feverishly. He left for India in November and landed in Bombay in early December. As he went through the country, he spoke to numerous chosen aristocratic gatherings. Everywhere he enthused over his second visit to the country (he had been to India before) with the naivete of a school boy. When the great moment came, he stood up before a colourful and dazzling levee, brilliantly ceremonious in all its oriental splendour, to announce the much talked of and eagerly-awaited rewards. The Royal proclamation, made in slow and measured tones amidst profound silence, offered amnesty to all political prisoners, set apart a sizeable sum of money

for the advancement of education, removed the ineligibility of Indian soldiers for the high military decoration of the Victoria Cross, granted an additional half-month's salary to the low-grade employees of the Government, transferred the seat of Government from Calcutta to Delhi and finally annulled the partition of Bengal. This last item of the announcement was psychologically well timed. At first it was received in funereal silence, followed by a wild outburst of cheering. The Hindu part of the audience went into raptures. The annulment decision immediately ensured the successful progress of the royal itinerary through the most crime-infested pockets of the Empire. When the King arrived in Calcutta a few weeks later, he was received with impassioned demonstrations of loyalty. Hindu Bengal vociferously acclaimed the 'boundless benevolence' of the Monarch, some of the journalists going so far as to suggest the inclusion of the white Maharaja and his Maharani (the King and the Queen) in the Hindu pantheon. Bonfires were triumphantly lighted throughout the two Bengals. The Indian National Congress passed resolutions expressing full-throated gratitude. It showered flattering encomiums on the Viceroy, Hardinge, who had lately succeeded Minto. All Hindu newspapers turned ardent Hardingites. With one voice they praised his great political acumen, writing that he was on the side of the angels in discharging the responsibilities of his exalted office to the complete satisfaction of all lovers of freedom and justice. The reversal of partition considerably relieved the political situation for the Government. Hardinge himself has recorded that the number of political murders went down appreciably and even totally stopped for a while.

Interestingly, a Christian writer of Hindu sympathies, Saint Nihal Singh, writing on the 'King's Tour in India,'[3] observed that it did not need much of a prophet to foretell that His Majesty was sure to commemorate his visit to India by granting some favour big enough to be associated with the epoch-making character of his tour, and put the question: 'What benefactions will please India the most?' He listed about a dozen of them which included the immediate grant of colonial self-government, scrapping of the Minto-Morley Reforms for giving preferential treatment to the Muslims, abrogation of Curzon's partition of Bengal, repeal of restrictive legislation like the Press Act, the Seditious Meetings Act and the Explosives Act, release of political prisoners, provision of 'simultaneous' Civil Service Examinations, reduction of salt tax, scaling down land revenue, and the absolute prohibition of the slaughter of beef-cattle. The last 36 line section of the article begins with this piece of advice: 'To be sure, the educated Indians possess strong lungs, and any boon given to them will be noised all over the world. Anything granted to the illiterate on the other hand, will not possess this advantage . . .'

The merger had several momentous consequences. The Civil Services were almost driven to madness. They could not forgive fickleness at the top. So long as partition stood, they identified themselves with the state policy and held out firm assurances of its permanence. But when this was reversed they felt they had lost face. The popular belief in the ability of the Government to adhere to its declared resolutions

was shattered and it seemed to teach the lesson, so it was stated by an embittered civil servant writing anonymously in *The Nineteenth Century*, 'throw bombs, discharge revolver shots, butcher Britons, and you will get all you want.'

The announcement was sudden and startling. One wonders how the decision was arrived at for it certainly involved an abrupt departure from the customary decision-making procedures and processes of the Government. Curzon's partition proposals were 'discussed to death, and gallons of ink, reams of paper, yards of speeches, were spent in dealing with their every aspect.' Hardinge's scheme, on the contrary, was carefully concealed, and sprung on the public as a surprise. In fact it proved to be one of the best kept secrets of history. Even the Queen had known nothing about it till she stepped on to Indian soil. Like most other stories told by career diplomats in print, Hardinge's brief account of his Indian years is laconic and raises more questions than it answers. However, it is one of the two authoritative accounts available and the student has no choice except to squeeze whatever he can out of it. As the late Viceroy wrote, the suggestion to set aside partition originated with the India Secretary, Crewe, who desired to pacify 'that section of the Indian political community who regarded the partition as a mistake.' Hardinge's initial reaction was one of indifference. But, continues Hardinge, 'later it was brought home to me that if there was to be peace in the two Bengals it was absolutely necessary to do something to remove what was regarded by *all* Bengalis as an act of flagrant injustice without justification. There was, at the same time, a feeling of expectancy abroad that something would be done to remove this injustice, and I appreciated the fact that if nothing were done, we would have to be prepared for even more serious trouble in the future than in the past.'[4] The argument is as simple as it is amusing. The policy of expediency has its uses as well as its limits. In 1905 partition was commended as an act of belated justice to the downtrodden people of Eastern Bengal. At a later stage, considerations of prestige turned it into a 'settled fact'. In 1911, Hardinge was able to describe it as an act of 'flagrant injustice' resented by 'all' Bengalis. The plain fact is that the campaign of terrorism initiated by the Hindus had succeeded. The case of the Muslims, who were the really aggrieved party, could be overlooked because they were too inarticulate to make their opposition important or effective.

When we turn to the lengthy official despatch of the Government of India addressed to the India Secretary on the subject, (published in *The Times* of 13 December 1911) we find it involved as well as uncommunicative. It is ingeniously conceived in the spirit of political finesse. It talks of its recommendations as proceeding from mature deliberation and not political expediency. It speaks of the bitterness over partition as unyielding and likely to increase rather than diminish; at the same time it attempts to combat the suggestion that the partition was the root cause of trouble. It admits that Eastern Bengal had benefited from partition and that its Muslim inhabitants were loyal and contented, though it adds the rider that results anticipated from partition had not been altogether realized. It confesses

to be a measure of appeasement, though it rules out the reversion to *status quo ante* as impossible. It recognizes the disappointment of the East Bengal Muslims at their reabsorption in the Western province, though it repudiates all intentions of defrauding them of their legitimate expectations. It declares the intention of effecting the change 'as soon as possible' with due regard to the dignity of the Government of India as well as for the public opinion of the rest of India and more especially for Muslim sentiment. It tied the question of the annulment of partition with the transfer of the capital, though the connection between the two was far from obvious. The Government's case was not very impressive. It was variously stated that Curzon's settlement of Bengal was undone because it had been decided to give up Calcutta, that the Hindus of Bengal could not be made to swallow this unless they were presented with a gratification which wore the appearance of victory and that the transfer of the capital to Delhi was in the nature of a gesture and a concession to Muslim feeling which was bound to be shocked by the reunion of the two Bengals. It is difficult to decide whether the revocation of this partition was meant to be a healing balm applied to Hindu wounds over the loss of Calcutta, or the transfer of the capital was contemplated as a sedative for outraged Muslim feelings. The case for it, however, was made out cleverly. The actual plea for the annulment of partition was condensed in a few sentences and was almost lost in the maze of specious reasoning. It said that 'Hindus in both provinces held most of the lands, filled the professions and exercised a preponderant influence in public affairs and that the partition would wrest away from them, in the course of time, the influence which their wealth and culture gave them.' Shorn of its verbiage, it was just an argument for the preservation of vested interests and class domination.

The territorial arrangements embodied in the Royal announcement were exceedingly adroit. The province of Eastern Bengal and Assam was abolished but the old Bengal was not restored. Three provinces were created out of the former province. The territories of Bihar and Orissa were made into a separate administrative division. Assam was reduced to its earlier and lesser status of a Chief Commissioner's charge. Calcutta again became the headquarters of the recreated Bengal which emerged very much smaller in area. Prior to the partition, the greater Bengal provided the educated Hindu classes with Government employment which was the most attractive means of livelihood for them. This field was now considerably restricted. Moreover, in the new Bengal Hindus were again outnumbered by Muslims by about two millions. So that Bengali satisfaction was soon turned into regret and after some time the Bengal Press was found to be divided against itself, proclaiming the annulment of partition as a concession and a catastrophe at the same time.

The transfer of the capital to Delhi involved a vast disturbance. Calcutta had been the seat of Government since the foundation of British rule. It was essentially a city of British merchants. To leave its palaces and offices, docks and railways, merchants and lawyers was a serious matter. Property-owners tried to use their influence against

the decision. The European commercial community feared that it would lose touch with the Government of India, and their journals, like the *Englishman* of Calcutta, denounced the change in offensive terms. The industrialists were disturbed for they felt this would affect their prosperity. They said that Delhi was inaccessible by sea, a fact which a maritime power like Britain could ill-afford to ignore, and even emphasized the ruinous cost of building a new capital. However, the undesirability of the continued location of the capital at Calcutta had been long apparent. Calcutta was not India. It had a unique Press which was very loud and forceful in the assertion of its views, and the Government of India was almost exclusively under its influence. The dissociation was urgently called for. The quieter environment of Delhi emancipated the bureaucracy from the tyranny of Calcutta's numerous pressure groups. Delhi's attractions were its historic renown, imperial connections, proximity to Simla, and its accessibility. But if the Government had wished to evoke Muslim enthusiasm by turning it into the capital, it was soon undeceived.

Hardinge regarded the city of Delhi very much as his own child. He took great personal interest in planning the new capital, and paid periodical visits to watch the progress of the new project. During one of these state visits on 23 December 1912, he passed through the heart of the city, accompanied by many leading chiefs, all mounted on elephants. Hardinge and the Vicerine were seated on an elephant of exceptional size. As the procession reached the busiest thoroughfare of Delhi, a bomb was thrown from one of the houses overlooking it. The Viceroy was seriously wounded and became unconscious due to loss of blood. The house was immediately searched from top to bottom but investigations failed to yield any clue of the miscreant, and one of the most daring outrages of the times remained untraced and unpunished.

The constitutional aspect of these far-reaching changes, made by an Executive decree, was debated in Britain. On the evening of 12 December Morley communicated to the House of Lords the main features of the Royal pronouncement, euphemistically summarizing them as the creation of a 'solid' Bengal. The leader of the opposition admitted the finality of the decision, emanating as it did, from the Sovereign: 'The word of the King Emperor has been passed, and that word is irrevocable', he said. But Curzon, who felt personally insulted, joined the controversy. The coronation announcement had been made on Ministerial advice after confidentially ascertaining the views of the Government of India. But the procedure was indefensible. Parliament was not taken into confidence, being denied the opportunity of discussing the issue. Its authority was successfully circumvented and, presented with a *fait accompli*, it was just required to rubber-stamp the Royal ukase. The violation of an important constitutional convention came from the very party which had carried on a persistent campaign for bringing the Government of India more directly and effectively under Parliamentary control and whose prominent spokesmen often claimed to have established the control of the House of Commons over Indian affairs. Writing on this theme in the *Fortnightly*

Review for February 1912, a critic reported sarcastically, 'The Government again plays the king and takes the trick . . . they are making use of Royal prerogative in the manner which, in their Unionist adversaries, they would have characterized as a return to the personal form of government . . . against which they would have hotly invoked all the embattled forces of democracy . . .' The argument, however, was not prolonged for fear of injuring the prestige of the throne.

The reversal of this partition was a shattering blow to the Muslims. It left them sullen and disillusioned. They were persuaded that Government had played them false. Indeed, some officials pointed out that the new province of Bengal would still have more Muslims than Hindus and tried to convince them that their control over it would still be assured. But this consolation was purely academic. How the community measured the new situation will be evident from the writings of Mushtaq Husain, Khwaja Salim Ullah of Dacca and Mohammad Ali, who represented the Muslim intelligentsia. Mushtaq Husain wrote in the course of an article:

> Muslims detest this measure (the reversal of partition). The Ministers of Crown in Britain had, from time to time, declined to reopen (Curzon's) decision. The reunion of two Bengals proves that the authority is crippled. In future no one can trust the pledged word of British Government . . . . . We shall not agitate for the reversal of the fateful verdict . . . . . But we do insist that East Bengal Muslims should be assured (in one form or another) the benefits which the partition brought them . . . . . Muslim patience has already been tried to the limit by hostile British policies towards Tripoli and Persia . . . . . This latest knock merely heightens our frustration and deepens our despair.
>
> .... This drastic measure has embittered our people. They are beginning to see that they do not gain much by keeping away from the Congress. Some would even wind up the League, and join the Congress *en bloc*. This is exactly what the Congress has wanted all along. But we do not agree with this. There is no point in sacrificing our own communal organization and getting swallowed up in a powerful majority. This is the way to self-destruction. The rivulet loses its identity in joining the ocean. We are not averse to the Congress on account of our loyalty to the Government. Loyalty is not an end in itself. It is only a means to an end. Loyalty is always conditional. It cannot stand impossible strains.
>
> .... It is clear as the day that Muslims can no longer put their faith in the Government. We have to rely upon God and on our own exertions . . . . . If we are disciplined that way, the Government will be compelled to respect our feelings. We have to learn a lesson from all that has happened . . . . . The Government deems it unnecessary to talk to us about our future. This (i.e. the Royal announcement) was like an artillery cavalcade ruthlessly trampling over Muslim corpses.[5]

Khwaja Salim Ullah of Dacca, 'the wounded soldier of the battle of partition', made the following observation in the course of his presidential address to the Muslim League held in Calcutta in March 1912:

No responsible person could discover a valid reason for reopening the issue since the agitation against partition had almost died out. The partition lasted from 1905 to 1911. Our adversaries felt sore at the prospect of Muslims coming into their own. Actually, we got nothing substantial out of it. But whatever little we secured was lost to our compatriots, who moved heaven and earth to wrench it back from us. They retaliated with murders and dacoities. They boycotted British goods. But all this meant nothing to the Government. The Muslims did not participate in this carnival of crime . . . They remained loyal as a community . . . . . Muslim cultivators stood to gain by the partition. Their Hindu landlords tried to drag them into the battle. But they did not respond. This caused Hindu-Muslim tension ... The Government resorted to a repressionist policy. But that did not mend matters. On the one hand, there was a wealthy and disaffected community. On the other, there were poor Muslims who had sided with the Authority. All this went on (for years). Suddenly the Government revoked the partition for administrative reasons . . . . . We were not consulted about it. But we bore it with patience . . .[6]

This leader of East Bengal Muslims was decorated G.C.I.E. on the very day of the announcement. In his distress he cried out that this was a bait, a bribe and a halter of disgrace round his neck.

Mohammad Ali spoke of it with great bitterness long afterwards:

The Muslims of East Bengal had been made to fight the battles of their rulers . . . and now that it was no longer convenient for the rulers to continue the fight, they made their own peace with all convenient speed . . . . .

It would be hard to discover in history a more ignoble instance of betrayal, in which loyalty had been rewarded with deprivation of recently recovered rights, and contentment had been punished as the worst of crimes . . .[7]

The only dissentient voice in this angry chorus was that of the Aga Khan, who declared that in the re-arranged province of Bengal Muslims would have 'larger opportunities of exerting their influence on a bigger stage.' But he was careful to point out that this view was merely personal, and was not to be regarded as coming from him in the capacity of the Muslim League President.[8] But as later events showed his expectation was unfounded.

The retraction of partition further embittered the relations between the two communities in Bengal. To quote Mohammad Ali once again:

The emancipated slaves were, so to speak, once more sold into bondage, and who does not know that revenge is sweet? Their old masters could have been excused if on being placed once more in the position of a slave-driver they used the lash and the bastinado a little too lavishly. . . . .(This) left the Muslims to the mercy of those against whom they had been used as auxiliaries.[9]

This outspoken declaration was made in Mohammad Ali's presidential address to the special session of the Indian National Congress held at Coconada in 1923. This organization had vehemently opposed the partition. There were many in this audience who had participated in the struggle, and their resentment must have been aroused by these remarks. The speaker, who was resolutely convinced of the justice of partition, though not of the good faith of its authors, could not have been unaware of it. Therefore, when he spoke of the 'emancipated slaves being sold back into bondage', and the slave-drivers applying 'the lash and the bastinado a little too lavishly' he could not have been making an overstatement. The following instance shows how the Hindus reacted to the annulment of the partition.

To console the inhabitants of Eastern Bengal, and to compensate them for the annulment of partition the Government decided to establish a university at Dacca to bring higher education to its backward people. Some of the leading Congressmen were furious and took strong exception to the proposed measure. The establishment of a rival seat of learning, it was reported, would lower the prestige of the Calcutta University, which was predominantly Hindu in its influence. A deputation, led by Surendranath Banerjea, told the Viceroy Hardinge, that the inception of another university in the province would destroy the harmony of national life, and accentuate the existing differences between the inhabitants of the areas served by the two different universities; they warned that the new university would make a poor start for want of sufficient academic talent and doubted the value of an institution of higher learning for a primarily agricultural people like the Muslims.[10] This unusual logic did not make an impression on the Viceroy and the protest was ignored. A committee was set up to frame a scheme for a residential university at Dacca. Incidently, this was the first Indian university which included Islamic studies in its courses of instruction.

The annulment of partition promoted a tendency among British writers to record the event and its antecedents with a reserve which amounts to tampering with history. Perhaps the fact has not yet received sufficient attention. The agitation that arose over the partition rocked British dominion in India. Its reversal was an undisguised act of submission which British writers usually hate to recall. That is why the accounts of partition contained in 'Memoirs', 'Impressions' and 'Experiences' are recorded with an eye to its later reversal.

These narratives cast aspersions on the wisdom of this partition in an effort not to make the king's announcement, reversing this decision, appear injudicious. Curzon is blamed for his haughty impetuosity which prevented him from bending before popular resistance.

3

If the abrogation of partition was the first massive Muslim grievance against the Government, the failure of the Muslim University movement, which followed closely, was the second. In the last quarter of the

nineteenth century, Muslim education had advanced steadily but it still fell short of Sayyid Ahmad's targets. When the foundation-stone of the M.A.O. College was being laid in 1876, he expressed the hope that it would soon develop into a Muslim University. A scheme for such a university was actually drawn up in his own lifetime, but it remained an ideal and a dream. In 1903, the Aga Khan revived and restated the idea in his presidential address to the Mohammedan Educational Conference. It continued to grow in discussions and newspaper articles, an organized move being launched seven years later. The Government promised consideration if the sponsors of the scheme could provide sufficient funds. King George V was due to visit the country at the end of 1911 and it was desired to receive the charter of incorporation at the Royal hands. A central committee was formed to settle the preliminaries and a university fund was opened. The Aga Khan came out as the first donor with a contribution of one lakh of rupees. Every old boy of the College offered a month's income while Mohammad Ali dedicated the columns of his *Comrade* to mobilize communal support. His brother, Shaukat Ali, a Government employee at the time, secured two years' leave to help in the collection of funds and threw himself into the task with his characteristic energy, acting as secretary to the Aga Khan, who headed one of the numerous subscription-collecting parties. The Aga Khan has recorded that the job was strenuous and kept their hands full for some months. For days and weeks they lived on railway trains. The appeal evoked a prodigious response and the figure of three million rupees was soon reached. The leaders of the movement were over-optimistic. They confronted the Government with an elaborate, perhaps extravagant, set of demands. They proposed to make Aligarh an autonomous centre of a standardized system of Muslim education with the power to annex (affiliate, as it was called) every Muslim educational institution located in any part of the country. Some zealots, talked of Aligarh performing the same role as renowned centres of Muslim education, like Cordova and Baghdad, in the past. When the theoretical unsoundness and practical difficulties inherent in an affiliating university were brought home to them, the leaders of the movement admitted the weakness of their case on purely academic grounds, but replied that every people had a right to fashion its system of instruction to correspond to its moral and material requirements. In the absence of an affiliating university, they asserted, all hope of improving Muslim schools and colleges would have to be abandoned. Their salvation lay in being placed under the tutelage of Aligarh. But educationally, an affiliating university is not a goal worth striving for and the educational argument was soon mixed up with the political argument. It is true that a formal claim to a separate Muslim nationality in the sub-continent was not advanced, but a vigorous assertion of a separate Muslim consciousness was abundantly evident throughout. The idea of a Muslim university was more political than educational.

The project evoked the opposition of influential Englishmen who argued that a Muslim university would be undesirable because of its sectarian tendencies and particularistic teachings.[11] Some Hindu

writers, such as B.C. Pal, identified the demand with a desire to establish a centre for the propagation of Pan-Islamism.

The Government took some months in considering the matter, delivering the final reply in the middle of 1912. It was actually dictated from London. Every significant Muslim demand was turned down. The Government, accepting the deficiencies of the prevailing system of education, argued that the remedy did not lie in creating yet another affiliating university but in encouraging and developing teaching and residential universities; an affiliating university would suffer from the want of corporate life; it would be stifled under the weight of external examinations; difficulties of supervision and inspection from one end of the country to another would be insuperable; linking of inferior institutions would, in course of time, debase the hall-mark of Aligarh and there would be no reverence for a remote and impersonal central institution and no loyalty to its ideals.[12] The Government also refused to permit the appellation 'Muslim', so that the university would be called Aligarh University and not 'Muslim' University. That was not the end of it. The powers vested in the Viceroy under the provisional constitution were to be exercised by the Government of India which would obviously place the university under state control and reduce it to the status of a Government department. Communal feeling had already been incited by the revocation of the partition of Bengal, and the new development aggravated it. Government logic was not convincing and Mohammad Ali reiterated the position:

> The Muslims want to evolve a certain type of education suited to their needs and their genius, and they want an All-India organization for that purpose. The proposed Muslim university was primarily designed to furnish that organization. But if that university is to be deprived of the power of guiding Muslim education throughout India by a well-planned system of affiliations, the main object underlying the movement falls to the ground.

Muslim indignation against the Government decision found expression in protest meetings throughout the country. The Government was firm and refused to review its decision, but Muslim India was thoroughly awakened and this awakening was without parallel. The steering committee decided to leave the affiliation statute as originally proposed, appointed a select committee to re-examine the project, continued the agitation and made another approach to the Government. When the rumour went round that some leaders of the movement were inclined to agree to the incorportion of a unitary university under Government pressure, Mr (later Sir) Mohammad Shafi of Lahore telegraphically threatened the central committee with legal proceedings if the demand for an affiliating university were abandoned under coercion. Mushtaq Husain wrote thus in the *Aligarh Institute Gazette:*

> Generations unborn will not forgive us for acquiescing in the Government injunction of a non-affiliating university. It is up to the

Government to take whatever action it likes on our representation. But we shall not look at a scheme so injurious to our collective well-being.[13]

At the same time, he accused the Government of want of sympathy and of demanding from Muslims standards which it did not maintain in the universities under its own control. The movement slowed down and finally reached deadlock because the Government was unyielding and the Muslims would not have their demands whittled down. Although the agitation lost its momentum it left the community moody and disturbed. Then came the first World War.

4

THE UNIVERSITY agitation was still simmering when the Cawnpore mosque affair leapt into prominence in July 1913. Some three years before this date, the city Municipal Board had decided to run a metalled road through Machchli Bazar, and the work required, among other clearances, the demolition of a small outhouse of a mosque standing in the area. The trustees of the mosque agreed to its removal. Fortified with the consent of the guardians, the Municipal authorities notified their intention of pulling it down. In Muslim eyes a mosque is a consecrated structure and immune from profanation. The Muslims of Cawnpore demurred and laid their views before Governor Meston in a mildly worded protest. Several Muslim leaders from outside, including Mohammad Ali (who kept the issue out of his journal for some time), tried to influence the Governor. While these parleys were going on, the demolition was carried out in the presence of a police posse on 2 July. The act aroused strong feelings and the Muslims immediately called for redress. A whole month passed but the Muslim protests continued to be ignored. Official attention being denied, the Muslims of Cawnpore gathered at the Idgah on 3 August, to decide on a course of action. When the meeting was over, an angry and agitated procession, estimated at 20,000, carrying black flags appeared before the mosque, and began to place loose bricks in place of the dismantled structure as a symbol of re-construction. A police force which was sent down to disperse the mob opened fire under the orders of the magistrate Tyler. The firing continued for fifteen minutes. Six hundred rounds of cartridges were used. Numerous persons were killed outright and many more were wounded. The mounted police also charged the demonstrators with bayonets. The Government sources reported sixteen dead and thirty wounded. This was an understatement. More than one hundred were arrested on the spot to face trial as rioters and disturbers of peace. A campaign of terror was inaugurated against the rest. Muslim India felt deeply hurt. This event was depicted in prose and verse in the Muslim Press throughout India. Some of the most moving verses in Urdu poetry recall the ferment of these days. When another request was made to Meston protesting against indifference and the persecution of the Muslims, he coldly declined to interfere, saying that he could 'not accept or appear to accept dicta-

tion by force'. Overwhelming sympathy was shown for the victims of police excesses and large sums of money were collected to help the bereaved. An army of Muslim lawyers poured in from different parts of the country to organize legal defence on behalf of the accused. This was not enough. It was proposed to send a deputation to England to get in touch with Ministers and members of Parliament, to acquaint them with the facts of the case, demand the renovation of the mosque, and prevent the recurrence of similar episodes. Mushtaq Husain wrote plainly:

If we let this opportunity go, and take things lying down, we shall have to submit not to one Tyler, but to many more. Every petty police functionary will assume the airs of a Tyler towards us. Let there be no mistake about it. Our liberties and our self-respect are entirely in our own keeping. We may hold them or throw away to be trampled under the (enemy's) feet.[14]

Apparently, Governor Meston remained unmoved. The gravity of the situation was lost on him and he allowed the situation to worsen waiting for Muslim wrath to die away. Later he left the country on a short spell of leave, but meanwhile the agitation had assumed serious proportions and spread all over the country. Continued reticence and inaction on the part of Government might have been perilous. Therefore under instructions from London, Hardinge was compelled to take notice of all that had happened. He went down to Cawnpore along with Ali Imam, the Muslim member of his Council. The gesture was welcomed and his mere presence restrained passions. In an address of welcome presented to him, the Muslim community of the city expressed full confidence in his judgement, and agreed to abide by his award. The Viceroy discussed the situation with Government officials and worked out a compromise, ruling out complete restoration of the premises, and maintaining the extension of the right of way ordered by the Municipal Board. An arcade was allowed to be built over the public road to make up for the lost accommodation. In the evening, Hardinge met the entire Muslim community of Cawnpore, pleaded for the burial of sad memories, and personally contributed to the fund raised for the relief of sufferers. The prisoners were set at liberty. The Muslim leaders extolled Hardinge's statesmanship. But the bitterness of the intelligentsia was not altogether assuaged. Quite a number of Britons viewed this as submission in a colonial territory, and openly stated that it was unwise of Hardinge to have adopted a policy of appeasement and that his action had greatly increased the difficulty of pacifying Muslim sentiment. They further declared that if the rioters had been tried and punished, the agitators would have learnt an unforgettable lesson. They deplored that 'concessions to the tumult had only stimulated the demand for more excitement,[15] Hardinge's contribution to the relief fund hurt them the most, for in their judgement it was calculated to give the impression that the Viceroy was satisfied of the justice of the cause for which they had fought. Such expressions were neither wise nor dignified. They blazed the trail of

bitterness. Meston felt humiliated and never forgave Mohammad Ali for taking up the matter with Morison, a member of the India Council, over his head. Subsequently, his wrath was visited on Mohammad Ali in different ways. His references to the Muslim community in his numerous post-retirement speeches and magazine articles were often oblique and prickly.

5

THE WORLD of Islam was passing through a grave crisis during the years under review. In the beginning of the century, progressive and reformist elements had arisen and asserted themselves here and there, but their influence was short-lived. Wherever established, constitutional governments were soon overthrown, while Muslim states were struggling for their very existence. But Indian Muslims were, above all, distressed by the cumulative effect of the rapid losses of Turkey's authority. Her troubles were the subject of constant conversation and unceasing lament in Muslim society and the Muslim Press. To the Sunni Muslims—this sect claimed the majority of Indian Muslims—the Sultan was the Khalifa, the successor to the successors of the Prophet. On him had fallen the holy mantle. He was the living voice of Islam, and the only personage entitled to interpret its law. Every Friday, the Sunni Muslim renewed his allegiance to the Khalifa and invoked Allah's blessings on him. For the millions of Indian Muslims the word Khalifa bore especial significance. Its mere mention brought an immediate stimulus of affection for Turkey and its cause. The sympathy of Indian Muslims with Turkey was not a new development for it had been evident a long time ago. In the days of the Crimean War, Governor-General Dalhousie referred to it in his private correspondence. In the 'dark' days of the Mutiny, the British ambassador to Turkey had managed to secure from the Sultan a command restraining Indian Muslims from waging war upon Britain.[16] The bonds of sympathy had strengthened with time and improved communications. They grew rapidly with the Pan-Islamist propaganda which, originally inculcating religious and political reform, was converted, first by Sultan Abdul Hamid and afterwards by the Young Turks, into an appeal to the faithful to rally round the Ottoman Khilafat. In 1877, when Russia stood at the gates of Constantinople, the Indian Muslims were perturbed. Even the illiterate and the inarticulate among them found means of showing how deeply they felt for the Khilafat. So long as Turkey was an ally of Britain, the Indian Muslims could ground their loyalty to the rulers on this alliance, but the situation was changed after 1878 when Constantinople increasingly came under the influence of Berlin. The Indian Muslim enthusiasm for the Khalifa was not seriously affected by this diplomatic shift and the Turkish triumph over the Greeks in 1898 was celebrated by illuminations even in the remotest corners of the Deccan. The second decade of the twentieth century started, as it also ended, unhappily for Turkey. Her tribulations began with Tripoli.

Mainly inhabited by Moorish tribes, Tripoli is a desert dotted with a few oases. A large proportion of its European population was Italian.

Only recently, Austria and France had made important territorial acquisitions at the expense of Turkey. Italy, keen on sharing further spoils, had already made careful military and diplomatic preparations for years. Under the pretext of ill-treatment of Italian nationals living in Tripoli, the Italian Government sent an ultimatum to the Sultan of Turkey and threw 50,000 men into Tripoli without waiting for a reply (September 1911). Turkey was caught unprepared and the raid was remarkably successful in the beginning. Italy would not respond to peace overtures till the coveted territory was almost entirely occupied. The Italian march through the country soon degenerated into an orgy of indiscriminate slaughter. The correspondents of *The Times*, the *Morning Post* and the *Daily Mirror* issued a joint statements vividly describing the wanton cruelty of the invader. They stated that on just one day Italian soldiers shot down a group of seventy unarmed men and boys with their hands tied behind their backs, bayonetted or clubbed to death wayfarers with butt ends of their rifles, broke into Arab homes and raped and murdered their occupants, and shot their victims not by a regular volley, but by a series of isolated shots.[17] Unable to contradict this factual report, the Italian journalists in London dismissed it as fabricated and unfair. The Italian lobby in England was also active. Professor G.M. Trevelyan, a great friend of Italy, wrote to *The Times* protesting against the 'too severe' strictures which tarnished Italian reputation.[18] Appalled at this partiality for unabashed brigandage, Ameer Ali voiced in strong terms his disapproval of Italian deeds, stating that if the Turks had committed a fraction of what was attributed to the Italians, there would have been a burst of indignation throughout Europe.[19] The Indian Muslims were again infuriated when Italy threatened to bomb the cities of Mecca and Medina, blockade the port of Jeddah, and ban the pilgrimage if the Turks refused to surrender.

The sympathies of Britain were plainly on the side of Italy. The Prime Minister showed decided impatience with all interpellations on Tripoli. The House of Commons shared the pro-Italian proclivities of its leader and received an adjournment motion on Italian atrocities with a sense of cold unconcern. The Speaker snubbed the member for using strong language against a friendly nation. *The Times* encouraged this attitude and commented editorially: 'Italy is an old and valued friend of Britain . . . and in frustrating this endeavour (i.e. discussion of the subject in the House) we are sure that he (i.e., the Speaker) interpreted aright the feeling not only of the House, but of the country at large'.[20] Turkey was even denied the use of her own territory to repel the onslaught. The request of the Sultan to be permitted to send troops to Tripoli via Egypt, which was still a part of his empire but actually under British occupation, was refused. Ultimately Turkey had to make peace with the aggressor on the aggressor's own terms, ceding the province of Tripoli to Italy.

The treaty had not yet been signed when war broke out in the Balkans. The plans, or rather the plot that led to it, had been laid months in advance in the capitals and courts of Europe. In the new conflict, as in the old, the odds were heavily against Turkey. After some

initial reverses, the Balkan allies swept through Macedonia, and carried the battle to the very gates of Constantinople. They let loose their irregulars to terrorize and uproot the Muslim population of Cyprus. The Sultan's appeals to the big European powers for mediation were ignored. Some amusing attempts were made to invest the war with a halo of sanctity. King Ferdinand called it a crusade. King George V had issued a proclamation on the anniversry of Trafalgar, declaring that England would maintain strict neutrality in the conflict. But the utterances of Prime Minister Asquith and other Ministers were bluntly unfriendly to the Turk, showing a cynical disregard of a pledge broadcast through the Monarch. In its earlier phase, when the war was not going particularly well for the enemies of Turkey, Asquith silenced all talks of territorial alterations at the end of hostilities. But when the allied prospects brightened, the British Prime Minister went back on his word and declared that it was unfair to rob the victors of the fruits of their victory. He even supported Bulgarian aggression in Thrace, lectured the Porte for re-occupying Adrianople by force of arms, advising him to clear out. It was difficult to understand how British interests would be served by turning Turkey out of Adrianople and installing Bulgarians in Thrace against the wishes of its inhabitants. The part played by the British Government at this juncture was ill-conceived and artlessly executed, shaking Muslim loyalty. The community, however, did not react with violence but with entreaties, beseeching Britain not to ride roughshod over its feelings. It was only gradually that tempers rose. When supplications failed, prominent leaders began to spend much of their time in travelling and addressing mass meetings to organize opinion in favour of Turkey. The Press was a valuable ally. Its tone became 'vigorous', that is to say, uncontrolled. Some of its more fiery writings were reprinted and distributed wholesale in the country.

Viceroy Hardinge showed his sympathy by declaring that the British Government meant no harm to Turkey, that he fully realized the importance of her continued existence as an independent power, in view of the religious interests of the Muslims of India, and of the desirability, indeed the necessity, of maintaining her custody over the Holy places of Islam in Arabia. But the utterances of British Ministers were too obvious to be mistaken. These could not be undone by an isolated utterance of their representative, an utterance which was promptly understood as a piece of diplomatic dexterity. But Hardinge went further by ordering the withdrawal of an Indian regiment stationed in Southern Persia as a measure of concession to Muslim sentiment. The pro-Turkish exuberance of the Muslims annoyed the Government which penalized it first by suppressing the Muslim newspapers and later by restricting the movements of Muslim leaders. In these very days Mohammad Ali's *Comrade* received from the Turks a pamphlet entitled *Come over into Macedonia and help us*. This appeal describing Balkan atrocities, addressed to Britain, asked for a rescue from the clutches of the Balkan allies. The security deposit of the *Comrade* was forfeited under the Press Law for reprinting this document. When an appeal against this order was lodged with the Calcutta High Court,

the judges pilloried the act, but upheld the conviction.[21] The Muslim community focussed its entire attention on the affairs of Turkey to the exclusion of all else. Red Crescent societies, which sprang up in all big cities, collected vast sums of money to help Turkey by the sale of Turkish bonds. The proceeds under this head were treated as a loan to Turkey. The Government was forced to permit the transmission of these collections to Turkey in the face of irrespressible enthusiasm. Zafar Ali Khan of Lahore, a poet, orator and journalist, who brought political awakening to the Punjab Muslims by a vigorous advocacy of Pan-Islamism, went to Constantinople in 1912 to present to the Grand Vizier a part of this money.[22]

In all this, as usual, Aligarh gave the lead. Students emptied their pockets, sold personal belongings like clothes and articles of decoration and dispensed with rich and expensive items of food. As the conflict prolonged, greater sacrifices were made. Schoolboys went to their morning classes without breakfast. The use of meat and meat-preparations was reduced to one half. Students assembled in the College mosque every evening to offer prayers for the victory of Turkish arms and to proclaim their resentment against Britain.[23] The Government and the European staff viewed all this with concern. The Principal was anxious to curb the growing 'indiscipline' among the students. Governor Meston paid a visit to Aligarh obviously with the intention of 'setting matters right'. In a long address he praised the courage and fortitude of the Turks, but advised students to concentrate on their studies, and not to endanger their health by practising starvation. On his advice the Trustees of the College forbade students from participating in politics. The Anglo-Indian and British Press violently assailed the Aligarh alumni, who led the new movement, charging the College with nursing sedition and Muslim leaders with promoting a rift between the Christians and the Muslims and with seducing the army. Some Aligarh old boys were anxious to avoid giving offence to British officials. Consequently, they discarded the use of the fez, the characteristic head gear of Indian Muslims, and the suffix 'Alig.' after their names. The more cautious of the Muslim elements waited on the Viceroy in January 1914 to assure him of the community's continued adherence to Sayyid Ahmad's political ideals. Hardinge was apparently satisfied with this assurance.[24]

A medical mission was organized and equipped for service in a field hospital with the Turkish army. It consisted of eight doctors, half a dozen dressers, about a dozen ambulance-bearers and was led by Dr M.A. Ansari. Six of its members were students, who had to discontinue their studies. It left in early 1913 and had an audience with the Viceroy before departure. Hardinge expressed the hope that the mission would prove useful in dealing with tropical epidemics, also complimenting Aligarh for being so well represented on it. The mission returned after six months, having presented the main part of its equipment to the Turkish Red Crescent Society.

In the heat of the moment, the Indian Muslims overplayed their part. Every day they despatched numerous telegrams to the Sultan and his Ministers urging the continuance of the war, in spite of the risks and

sacrifices this would involve. These messages also contained impossible promises of financial help. The Aga Khan was openly critical of these methods, being convinced that words did not help the Turk. On the other hand, they did him considerable harm. In an interview with the Press he warned the Muslim leaders of their ignorance of the grim realities of the situation, and of the tremendous sacrifices which the war entailed upon Turkey. He urged upon them to cease harassing the Turk with irresponsible advice. But this advice was ignored by the bulk of the community.[25] Nevertheless, the relations between the Indian Muslims and the Turks were further strengthened by a frequent exchange of visits by leading personages. Early in 1914, the Turkish Consul-General in India, Khalil Khalid Bey came to Lahore to present to the Badshahi mosque a carpet sent by the Sultan as a mark of gratitude for pecuniary assistance. A few weeks later he was followed by two doctors of the Red Crescent Society.[26]

In the summer of 1913 the Society of the Servants of the Ka'aba was formed with the object of 'maintaining inviolate' the sanctity of the three harems of Islam, Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. Regardless of his means, every member paid a modest uniform levy of one rupee on the day of pilgrimage and signed a pledge to guard these sanctuaries with, if need be, his life. Within six months it enrolled a few thousand members. But when the war ended, the Ottoman Turks had been practically driven out of Europe and Turkey lay vanquished and exhausted

6

IT WAS in the midst of the Cawnpore agitation that two of its prominent figures, Mohammad Ali and Wazir Hasan slipped out of the country incognito. Their intended departure had been kept a secret for they apprehended obstruction from the Government. Mohammad Ali has briefly spoken of the purpose which took them abroad. He says that uppermost in their minds were: first, the Cawnpore affair which had caused deep stirrings among the Muslims; secondly, the stringent Press law which had cost the security deposit of the *Comrade* and landed the paper in financial difficulties, and thirdly, the fate of Turkey, which, defeated on both fronts, faced extinction. They wanted to place the Muslim views on these issues before British parliamentarians and politicians and press for a change of British policies, foreign and Indian. When they reached England, Parliament was in recess and very few of its leading members could be reached. But as soon as they set to work, their difficulties and disappointments began for they soon discovered that they were running their head against a wall. British public men who kept an eye on the Indian situation knew just this much about Cawnpore; 'that some blood-thirsty ruffians had broken the law and the heads of the police without rhyme or reason.' *The Times* and other newspapers were hostile. Letters and clarifications sent to them went mostly unpublished. Whatever they accepted was inserted in garbled summary and created the very misunderstandings they sought to remove. The India Secretary, Crewe, ques-

tioned their credentials and denied them a hearing on the ground that it would be resented by Muslims holding different opinions. He felt sure of the adequacy of his own sources of information about the 'feelings and aspirations of the King's Muslim subjects' in India and would not care to be instructed from any other source. With regard to Turkey, Mohammad Ali came to the conclusion that 'she had almost lost the Balkan war before it had been declared, for it was not fought on the battlefields of the Balkans, but in the editorial sanctums, and on the public platforms, in the pulpits,[27] in the clubs, and in the drawing-rooms of Western Europe. The Turk was unspeakable mainly because he was a Muslim whose religion permitted polygamy and divorce . . . And so long as he had for capital the city founded by the first Christian emperor of Rome, whose name it bore . . . what could be more agreeable than to turn him out bag and baggage?'[28] Therefore, in the face of strongly entrenched and constantly reinforced prejudice, it was futile to expect British public sympathy for Turkey.

For Mohammad Ali another painful finding of this unprofitable journey was that the generality of British parliamentarians was singularly ill-informed on India, and that while Hindus had been striving for better understanding between themselves and the British public, the Muslim case had almost lapsed by default. He also carried back an unhappy memory of the methods and dealings of the Labour leader, Ramsay Macdonald. The two had first met in India in 1912 when the latter had come out as a member of the Islington Commission on public services. In the first encounter Macdonald warmly praised Mohammad Ali's journalistic talent and introduced himself as a regular reader of the *Comrade*. But when in 1913 Mohammad Ali cabled him from India to take up the Cawnpore case in Parliament, he did not reply. At the end of the same year they met again, in Britain. Mohammad Ali brought in the subject and made a grievance of his reticence. Macdonald evaded the question by saying, 'Oh, Mohammad Ali is such a common name. I could not possibly guess it were you.' Later he excused himself by remarking that he was fully alive to the urgency of the issue, but that 'the cable was buried under his papers, and then he forgot all about it.' Subsequent dealings confirmed Mohammad Ali's opinion that as a class, Labour politicians had litle sympathy with the viewpoint of Indian Muslims.'[29]

Thus the annulment of partition, the failure to establish a university of the desired pattern, the Cawnpore commotion, and Britain's anti-Turkish policies, isolated the Muslims of India from their rulers, forcing a revision of attitudes and policies. They learned to their cost that loyalty did not pay and that agitation and violence did. This realization had already begun to shape their practice. It has been sometimes suggested that Muslim political activity began with Government encouragement. Even if this was the original impulse, it soon expanded and over-stepped the prescribed limits. The importance of the older elements waned and they were practically cast aside. A new generation had arisen, with its youth receiving much the same education as their Hindu compatriots. They were pleaders, school-masters and journalists who had been turned out by the universities. They had

mastered the same technique of propaganda and could make their opinions felt through the Press and from the platform. The Muslim League had been called into existence in the troubled days of partition. The protection of communal interests figured prominently in its objectives. But a change came over as early as 1910 when its central office was shifted from Aligarh to Lucknow. Caution verging on timidity was the keynote of League politics at Aligarh. The new place was better fitted to give impetus to a more energetic and forward-looking policy. The president of the annual League session held at Nagpur in 1910 partly discarded the customary and guarded phraseology of the League platform and led a mild attack on the civil service. The conduct of some of its members, he said, lent colour to the allegation that they tried to play off one community against the other to prevent them from coming together. The charge, he continued, was unfortunately too widely believed to be ignored.[30] He also emphasized the need for Hindu-Muslim unity and for making a beginning by frequent 'exchange of notes and holding friendly discussions on all questions affecting the general well-being of the country.' At the end of 1911, the Secretary of the League issued a circular letter to all members of the organization exhorting them to rise to the level of political consciousness prevailing among the Hindus, to co-operate with them in all non-controversial matters, to rid themselves of the fatal delusions of the past and learn self-reliance by forgetting their expectations from the Government. He also referred to the very vocal and legitimate criticism of the undemocratic League constitution, ending by recognizing the need for its amendment. In December 1912, some prominent Muslim leaders appeared on the Congress platform at Bankipur to declare that the time was coming when both Hindus and Muslims would stand side by side on 'this our national platform' and work 'shoulder to shoulder for the regeneration of the common motherland.' Next year the Congress held its annual gathering at Karachi in the predominantly Muslim area of Sind to demonstrate the feasibility of Hindu-Muslim concord and discussed the subject of Hindu-Muslim unity at more than usual length. The League sitting of the same year was attended by a large number of outstanding Congress leaders, including the poetess Sirojani Naidu. Its proceedings were marked by a new spirit and its resolutions exhibited a more radical trend. It proceeded to modify its creed in two directions: 'loyalty' still remained the first article of association, but the centre of loyalty was now to be the 'Crown' and not the established Government in India, as in the past. The unceasing Congress talk of 'colonial self-government' for India was offensive to the Biritish and the League had carefully avoided it thus far. But now it outgrew its shyness and it resolved to add the 'attainment of suitable self-government for India' to its objectives. 'Suitable self-government' apparently meant a system of self-rule in which the Muslims were to have a share proportionate to what they considered to be their political rather than numerical importance. Mohammad Ali interpreted it as self-government for the Muslims along with other communities of India. However, the permeation of the Congress influences created a split in the ranks of the

League. The hot-heads, who called themselves 'Ahrar', poured ridicule on the qualifying adjective 'suitable', scorned it as timid and negative and asserted that the new-fangled professions of the League lacked foundation and sincerity. They would have it speed up its ideological journey to catch up with the Congress. Others had misgivings of an entirely different order. They believed that every species of self-government would culminate in uncontrolled majority rule, resulting in the enslavement of the Muslims. The imitation of Congress ways, they said, would ultimately work to the detriment of the Muslims themselves. While the Muslims fought out the merits of the two sets of rival opinions among themselves, the Congress was all praise for the League, and looked forward to greater co-operation between the communities.

While these developments were tending to bring the League under extremist control, the Aga Khan concluded that the League was shaping 'not as a national organization but as a political party' and that it did not need a leader, but leaders. Accordingly, he tendered his resignation from its presidency which he had held since 1906. In the letter of resignation, he hinted at numerous reasons, public as well as private, but he did not propose to cut himself away from it. 'Resignation,' he wrote, 'frees me from that necessarily judicial character that attaches to the presidency.'[31] Ameer Ali also resigned the headship of the London branch, but was later prevailed upon to come back.

In so far as the League and Muslim India were consciously demonstrating their sense of belonging to the world of Islam, their ideas and activities were as abhorrent to the Government as those of the Congress. The correspondent of *The Times* wailed at the passing of the day when the Muslim community, in its apathy and ignorance, did not concern itself with shifts in international groupings and loyalties. On 19 April 1913, the paper wrote editorially, "Two noteworthy movements have recently become manifest among the Muslims in India. The first is a tendency in their political leaders to identify themselves closely with the programme of the Indian National Congress. The second is a disposition, still somewhat partial in its scope, to foment angry excitement about the fate of Turkey and to attack British policy in the Near East . . . ' The 'new orientation', *The Times* pointed out rightly, ran counter to the basic purposes of the League. Reverting to the subject on 2 January 1914, it described the Muslim situation as having 'changed for the worse', adding that the community could no longer be looked upon 'as a comparatively passive factor in Indian politics'. It is also noteworthy that a vocal section of the Indian National Congress, led by Bipin Chandra Pal, which had persistently uttered warnings against the destructive potentialities of political awakening among the Muslims, began to denounce Muslim solicitude for Turkey in violent terms. It represented 'Pan-Islamism' as the greatest threat to Indian Nationalism, and as an unveiled challenge to all non-Muslim rulers of the Muslim peoples.[32] It also complained that the Government had unwittingly played into the hands of the Pan-Islamists and pandered to their vanity by giving the Muslim community an artificial weight in the constitution of the reformed councils. Although these ideas were entrenched in the Hindu mind, the more shrewd Congress

politicians considered it impolitic to air them from the Congress forum and they had their way.

The new movement in Muslim politics was accompanied by a strong revivalist sentiment, which arrested for the time being at least, the progress of disruptive trends in Muslim society stimulated by the impact of the West. The faithful composed their differences. The dividing line between the Western educated and the orthodox was gradually blurred, almost obliterated, and with it were buried their bitter doctrinal feuds. The 'men of new light' made a close study of their religion, and changed their dress and appearance to conform to the orthodox fashion. The change in Shaukat Ali's mode of life and interests and activities may be cited as typical. His brother, Mohammad Ali, has written that, 'from a smart, half-Europeanized, fashionably dressed . . . (young man) who used to be in great demand at European gymkhanas and clubs on account of his sporting exploits, and who prided himself on his pretty taste in silk shirts—he became a poorly, not to say shabbily, dressed Bombaywallah in a loose long green coat of queer cut.' His newly-grown shaggy beard, Shaukat Ali described as his fiercest protest against the West and Christendom.[33] His self-imposed duties as a member of the Society of the Servants of Ka'aba brought him into contact with the unfortunate and helpless class of intending pilgrims to the Hejaz. He undertook to pull them out of their miseries. An extortionist British shipping company, holding the monopoly of pilgrim traffic, used to start the season with the announcement of cheap fares to lure its passengers to the only port of embarkation to raise the tariffs as soon as the port was thronged with unsuspecting devotees from all parts of the country. Their meagre savings were consumed in the pilgrim sheds, while they waited, in vain, for the prices of passages to come down. To help them in their sufferings, Shaukat Ali took out the licence of a broker for the sale of passages.[34]

Before closing the subject, it is worth our while to be clear about the aims and methods of the old and the new Aligarh leadership. Politically, Sayyid Ahmad and his associates stood for constitutionalism and moderation, while new leaders had markedly extremist leanings. The former were cool and clear-headed thinkers, the latter were emotional and demonstrative. The former were definite about their ultimate objectives, the latter were not. As a matter of fact, much of their thinking was clouded by slogans. Sayyid Ahmad and his school wrote extensively in prose and have left us permanent and voluminous writings. The new leadership expressed itself mainly through journalistic writings most of which are lost for ever. The prose of the old school was businesslike, while that of the new school was vague and highly ornate. The new generation was much more fond of poetry and oratory and almost disdained simple prose. Sayyid Ahmad and his school were liberal and rational in religion, while the new leadership prided itself on orthodoxy. The relationship between means and ends was fully grasped by the old; it was obscure to the new school. The Aligarh movement produced many good speakers and some orators, but to them the capacity for effective speech was but a means to an end; for the new, leadership, one might suspect, it was an end in itself.

IV

THE WAR AND AFTER

The war breaks out—The Indian Muslims, Turkey and the war—The Revolutionary movement and the revolutionaries—The Meccan revolt—The revival of political life—Towards a new constitution—The Rowlatt Bills—Martial Law in the Punjab—The Khilafat question—The Khilafat deputation—The Non-Cooperation movement—The Hindu-Muslim alliance—The Khilafat and Hijrat movements—Retrospect

WHEN the war broke out, India was in a state of political uncertainty. Anarchism, which was rampant inside the country, presented disturbing problems to the Government. Numerous centres of revolutionary propaganda abroad drew a large number of young Indians into their fold, turning them into rebels. Political dacoity still struck terror in Bengal. Student indiscipline and frustration found outlets in strikes and demonstrations. Growing discontent with the working of the Minto-Morley Reforms crystallized into an insistent constitutional movement. The Hindus and Muslims had found a common political platform and were speaking the same political language.

Britain declared war against the Central Powers on 4 August 1914. The established Government in India entered this War in obedience. Enemy aliens in the country were interned and enemy ships lying in Indian ports were seized. The Viceroy appealed to the Press and political parties to stop all political controversy. The call was singularly effective. It closed public discussion of all controversial subjects immediately. The Press began to 'behave' and abandoned its traditional strafing of the civil service. A strange change seemed to have come over political India. The Congress turned a new leaf. Its leaders began to outdo each other in uproarious affirmations of loyalty. Surendranath Banerjee, for instance, declared in the Madras Congress (1914) that they wished 'to proclaim to the Kaiser, and to the enemies of England that behind the British army was the Indian people, who as one man would defend the Empire and die for it.' Discharged from the prison, Tilak came out much chastened. He disclaimed all hostility to the Government and repudiated all acts of violence. The present, he said, was not the time to ask for large political changes of doubtful value. The preservation of the British authority over India, he argued, was essential even from sheer self-interest.

The European War did not at first appear seriously to disturb the tranquillity of Asia. The Government regarded the defence of the North-West frontier as its sole duty. Consequently, sufficient forces were held in readiness to take the field against possible tribal unrest. But the British and French troops on the Western front were soon exhausted, necessitating the despatch of a large fighting force and substantial quantities of arms and equipment from India. The first division

of the Indian army landed in Marseilles on 24 September, the second following a week later. They were rushed to the Somme to strengthen the depleted British army, their arrival being most welcomed. Some, like Lord Sydenham, opposed the employment of Indian troops in France, fearing that the tremendous shell-fire, combined with the damp cold of a northern winter, would prove too much for their nerves, but the test was bravely borne. Later, when Turkey entered the war, Indian troops were transferred to other strategic points, like the Persian Gulf, Suez Canal, and Shatt-ul-Arab. India paid not only the expenses of troops stationed within her own borders, but made a request—an inspired request—through her legislature to Parliament to suspend the statutory provision forbidding her to pay for her troops serving abroad. The financial drain on India was incredible for the numerous requirements of modern warfare, horses, mules, hospital-ships, motor cars, and ambulances were purchased out of public contributions raised in India. Indian blood was bravely shed and Indian treasure lavishly spent. At the end of the first year of the war, the Viceroy was able to claim that India had been 'bled white' in the service of the Empire. These sacrifices created a tremendous impression in Britain where several prominent statesmen, one after another, made pronouncements about the likelihood of India being raised to a higher political status after Allied victory. Some of these utterances were excessively rhetorical, and India read more into them than was intended. They raised hopes of a speedy grant of the ardently demanded 'colonial' form of self-government, but as the war went on, British Ministers immersed in the problems of more immediate concern, almost forgot India.

Within the country the war brought about important changes. The British serving on the civil side of the administration were rapidly withdrawn. The work done by them, or rather reserved for them, was entrusted to Indian hands. The country was practically denuded of British troops, shifting the burden of defence almost entirely on to the Indian troops.

2

TURKEY emerged out of the Balkan War dangerously enfeebled and worn out. For her another war was out of the question. She needed long years of peace to recoup and recover. Her administration was disrupted and her Government was under complete German control. If she threw herself into the present ordeal, the area of the conflict would be immensely widened and the Eastern and Muslim peoples would be inevitably involved. Britain did not relish the prospect, as a neutral Turkey suited her best. Overtures were made and guarantees against further spoliations offered. Teufiq Pasha, the Turkish ambassador in London, and the Aga Khan acted as intermediaries.[1] Turkey did not respond for she had learnt from experience not to rely on guarantees given by the Great Powers. Muslim India waited tensely, observing these developments. If the recent course of British diplomacy had been harmful to Turkey, that of German diplomacy had been

callous. Germany had dealt with Turkey in a spirit of calculated and extreme selfishness and had lost all claim to Turkish gratitude. Aware of these facts, Mohammad Ali cabled a message to the Turkish premier, Talaat Pasha, imploring him to think very carefully before taking the plunge, and begging him to save Turkey and the rest of the Muslim world from catastrophe by following a policy of the 'strictest neutrality'. A few days later, he wrote in the *Comrade* that if Turkey took the fateful step the Muslims would stand by their Government and would not in any way add to the embarrassment of their rulers. India's association with Britain was indispensable at this juncture in history. He went on to say:

> Whether Great Britain has respected Muslim Indian feeling in her dealings with Turkey, Persia, Morocco or not, whether the utterances of His Majesty's Ministers regarding Turks in their life and death struggle during the last war have been just or consistent, or unjust and inconsistent, whether their action following two breaches of treaty obligations, by Austria in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and by Italy in Tripolitaine, have tallied or not with the recent public proclamations of their sense of the sacredness of treaties, whether their conscience has revolted or not at the slaughter of babes and sucklings, unprotected womanhood and bed-ridden age in Tripoli and the Balkans....whether in the annulment of the partition of Bengal the Muslims were treated with due consideration for their loyalty, or it was under-rated and their contentment taken too much for granted, whether the sanctity of their places of worship . . . (had) been uniformly respected or sometimes lightly sacrificed to the Moloch of Prestige—we say that, irrespective of any or all of these considerations . . . we shall remain loyal (to Britain) as only freemen can remain loyal.[2]

The deadly sarcasm of the passage will not escape the reader. This loyalty was not evidently based on nice calculations of profit and loss. Though the compulsions of events left no bolder alternative, it could hardly be sustained by even such coercive factors as continual and convincing Allied victories in the field of battle. But here we are anticipating.

In November 1914, Turkey made her choice. She linked her destiny with that of Germany, proclaiming her entry into the War as a *jihad*. Her intervention was replete, as the Aga Khan has pointed out, with complex, unforeseen, and far-reaching eventualities. It meant the destruction of the Khilafat, and along with the extinction of Constantinople as the rallying-point of the Muslim world. This led to the rise of modern Turkey divested of her former empire, the Greek adventure in Asia Minor, the establishment of British tutelage over the Arabic speaking countries, the political ascent of Zionism and its clash with Arab aspirations, and the rise of Iraq and Jordan as independent entities.[3] After her entry into the war, Turkey was simultaneously trounced on several fronts. However mild its expression, Muslim India felt the 'calamity' most acutely. The British were well aware of it and

they immediately proceeded to reassure the community in a public announcement, apparently dictated from London, which declared, 'In view of the outbreak of the war between Britain and Turkey . . . the Viceroy is authorized to make the following public pronouncement in regard to the Holy places of Arabia, including the holy shrines of Mesopotamia and the port of Jeddah, in order that there may be no misunderstanding on the part of His Majesty's most loyal Muslim subjects in this war . . . These holy places and Jeddah will be immune from attack or molestation by the British naval or military forces so long as there is no interference with pilgrims from India to the Holy places and shrines in question. At the request of His Majesty's Government, the Governments of France and Russia have given similar assurances.'

There is no ambiguity about this ill-fated pledge. At a later stage, it was wholly set aside by its authors, but it was being violated even at the time it was being given. British armies were already on the march in Mesopotamia. Naturally the announcement brought no consolation to the Muslims and failed in its purpose. In the coming years, it became the subject of a heated controversy. The British denied having meant all that the Muslims read into it. But no amount of casuistry could repel the charge of a breach of faith.

When the war began, the affiliations of the Afghan King, Habib Ullah, were unpredictable. His attitude soon became a cause of anxiety to the Government. The decline of Turkey left him as the 'residuary beneficiary' of the growing sentiment of Pan-Islamism. Eversince the deposition of Sultan Abdul Hamid, he had advertized himself as the champion of the Muslim world. It was being constantly broadcast from Kabul that every other Muslim ruler was a puppet in the hands of Imperialist powers, and that Habib Ullah was the only hope of Islam. Turks constituted the most important foreign community in Afghanistan. They were extensively employed in different branches of the government, but principally as instructors in military establishments. The Afghan government also maintained permanent representatives at the holy places of Mecca, Medina and Baghdad, and kept in touch with Karbala and Najaf, the centres of the Shia world.[4] Attempts were made to win over Habib Ullah and prevent him from going the way of Turkey. On the receipt of a handsome subsidy, he gave a solemn promise of friendly neutrality as long as his independence was not threatened.[5]

After this assurance British propaganda emphasized that the war was not a *jihad* and did not involve the interest of Islam in any way. The Muslims could not rightfully engage in *jihad* unless commanded by the Khalifa, and the Khalifa, in the present context, was the ruler of Afghanistan, and not the Porte.[6] The Government also attempted to influence Muslim opinion by securing the assent of eminent Muslim divines to these propositions. The head of the foremost theological seminary of Deoband, Mahmud-ul-Hasan by name, incurred the wrath of the Government by refusing compliance, and had to leave the country. This was soon followed by a policy of persecution. Almost

all the *ulema* and Muslim public workers of note were interned on vague charges of 'causing constant inconvenience to the King's Government', 'likely to be dangerous', 'of pro-German sympathies', 'in correspondence with the enemy', and 'writing treasonable letters'. The Muslim Press was virtually gagged. In 1913, the Muslim League had passed a resolution protesting against the British policy of leaving Turkey to her fate. This body did not meet in 1914. Opinion was divided the following year, and one section of Muslim leadership preferred not to create difficulties for the Government, thus remaining silent, while the other which did not favour such reticence, prevailed. The League meeting was held in Bombay in 1915 and the veteran Congressman, Mazhar-ul-Haq, was elected president. In the presidential address the subject came in for a casual mention and was dismissed in two brief but meaningful sentences, 'It is a sore point with us that the Government of our Caliph should be at war with the Government of our King Emperor. That hostility should have come about is the greatest misfortune that could possibly have befallen Muslims.'

3

ONE of the immediate results of the war was to galvanize the revolutionary movement against British rule in India. Part of it was directed from abroad and was probably older than the one proceeding from within the country. In 1901, a British military officer had found two thousand Sikhs in Shanghai 'disaffected'. In 1908, the Viceroy informed the legislature that destructive influences emanated from 'sources beyond the confines of India'.[7] In the same year, it was reported to the Government that subversive doctrines were being preached to the Indian immigrants on the Pacific coast of Canada, who were particularly receptive on account of the harsh treatment they received from the Canadian government. Mention was also made of a grocer's shop in Vancouver being used as a counter for the exchange of letters between the revolutionaries abroad and their fellow workers at home.[8] Acting on reliable information Scotland Yard was going about in search of Indian revolutionary nests in New York and Chicago. The extent of anarchist activity in Britain itself was alarming. Ardent recruits were found amongst students. One member of the India Council, Sir Lee Warner, was waylaid on his way to the Athenaeum Club by a Hindu student, and another member, Sir Curzon Wylie, was assassinated by another Hindu student in Caxton Hall.

The India office felt it necessary to discourage Indian students from coming to England and to place those who were already there under close supervision. Sir Thomas Arnold, the well-known orientalist, was appointed adviser to Indian students to exercise a 'wholesome influence' over them. The East India Association helped in forming an association of well-affected students probably with the intention of organizing counter-propaganda.

Interesting details of revolutionary enterprise were revealed in a famous trial in the district court of San Francisco, which began on

20 November 1917 and ended on 23 April 1918, and in which an unusually large number of Indians and Germans, and a few Americans figured as defendants. All the accused pleaded not guilty and some of them offered no defence. They alleged that the prosecution had been inspired by the British Government. In his charge to the jury, the judge described theirs as 'a scheme of comprehensive character and far-reaching ramifications'. The evidence disclosed that the city of San Francisco was the nerve-centre of the conspiracy. The director of its central office was extremely careful about the safe keeping of its records and had them nightly deposited in the safe deposit box of the Bank of Italy. The revolutionary agencies functioned from Constantinople, Geneva, Tokyo, Manila, Hong Kong, Peking, Bangkok and numerous other cities in the Orient. Largely staffed by German diplomatic agents, they brought out propaganda pamphlets instigating Indian races to an immediate armed revolt. Russian anarchist manuals were used wherever necessary. The German Government furnished funds through its embassy in Washington. Men were enlisted and sent for 'service' to India under German officers along with quantities of arms and explosives. Extensive arrangements existed in India for the reception and concealment of weapons and powder. Large consignments of German arms were also despatched to India through Afghanistan. A party of sixty recruits was despatched on the steamship *Korea*, and others followed in batches. Detailed instructions about movements and dispositions were constantly received from Berlin in code telegrams. German agents in the Far East planned fresh lines of communication to India. They travelled from continent to continent in disguise and under assumed names.[9]

A brief mention may here be made of the principal revolutionary figures outside India. The pioneer was Shyamji Krishnavarma. Born in 1857 in Western India, he graduated from Oxford, where he taught Sanskrit for some time and endowed the Herbert Spencer Lectureship. His idea in founding the chair was to offer it, from time to time, to well-known scholars for lecturing on political rather than scientific subjects. He had wide contacts in British society. He was a personal friend of the Viceroy Dufferin and was introduced to Northbrook by Gladstone. In India he acquired considerable political importance by serving as Chief Minister in three prominent states in succession. One of the factors shaping his personality was the influence of the politician Tilak, with whom he had a lasting friendship. He was also the brain behind the militant Arya Samaj. He worked with Dayananda and gave new life and precise direction to his movement. Later, he installed himself in London and formed close contacts with Socialists, supplying them with materials to assail the Government on Indian questions. In 1905, he established a student centre, called India House, which offered boarding and lodging to Indian students at cheap rates. In the same year, he started a penny monthly called the *Indian Sociologist*.[10] This paper was outspokenly revolutionary, expounding the doctrine that political assassination was no murder. His entire reading of history amounted to a justification of the use of violence for the attainment of political freedom. The ideological harmony between

Herbert Spencer and the ancient Hindu law-giver, Manu, running throughout his writings, conforms to the familiar Hindu pattern of piecing together insignificant bits of information abstracted from ancient books to prove that the latest developments in modern thought were accepted as full-fledged philosophies in the remotest past of the Hindu race. Krishnavarma's political views cost him his social influence and alienated many of his intimate English friends. He was also disbarred by the Inner Temple of which he was a member. The British police was also alerted against him. Fear of consequences obliged him to flee from Britain in 1907 and he sought asylum in Paris. But the *Sociologist* continued to be published from London. Though its entry was forbidden in India, its copies were smuggled into the country and enjoyed clandestine circulation. When *The Times* attacked him in 1909, he stoutly defended his views. His name was dragged in the famous Mylius libel on King George V. In 1912 when a bomb was thrown on Hardinge, he called it a 'sobering influence on its victim'.[11] He had done much of his work by the beginning of the World War.[12] We do not hear much about him after that date. When Jawaharlal Nehru saw him (1927) in Switzerland, he found him living a gloomy life, in a dust-laden and neglected dwelling, away from human contacts. He entered into enthusiastic conversations about his past. He was moneyed but niggardly. He suspected everybody who approached him either as a robber or as a British spy.[13]

The next in order of importance was Hardyal, a Brahmin of Delhi. After a brilliant academic career at an American college in Lahore, he was sent to Cambridge in 1905 at Government expense. An intense Anglophobia came over him, he gave up his studies two years later and declined to receive the last instalment of his fellowship as a protest against the 'emasculating' effects of the English system of education on the Indian youth. In 1908, he came back and threw himself into the boycott movement and preached the value of passive resistance against British rule in India. In 1911, he left for the United States to settle down in San Francisco among a varied group of Indian immigrants. Here he founded the Ghadar party. (Ghadar is the Urdu for 'rebellion'.) Throughout the States and more particularly on the West coast, Hardyal addressed numerous public meetings and at one of them held in Sacramento on 31 December 1913, he displayed portraits of famous 'revolutionary martyrs' on the screen. His party also claimed credit for the bomb thrown on Hardinge in Delhi. German financial assistance enabled the party to bring out a journal, after its own name which was prepared in three languages, English, Urdu and Gurmukhi. The party also ran an *ashram*, or training centre, for revolutionary workers and owned a press for producing books and pamphlets. The newspaper, *Ghadar*, exhorted its readers to use any and every means to rid themselves of the British 'vampire'. Hardyal came under the spell of Krishnavarma's dynamic personality and often quoted him with approval in his own contributions to the *Sociologist*. Like most leaders of nationalist thought in India, he was a staunch defender of Hindu orthodoxy. In one of his articles he made the following declaration:

> I may state once for all that I do not believe in any programme of Indian nationalism which does not include the protection of the cow, the prevention of the spread of Christianity, the preservation of the state, the school, and the home from the evil effect of foreign control and influence . . .[14]

In another context he stated that marriage with foreigners was the death warrant of nationalism because a national state could not be founded on denationalized homes.

In 1914, the United States authorities arrested him. He was on the point of being deported as an undesirable alien when he absconded to Europe. Soon he found himself in Berlin at the head of the 'leaders of the Indian Revolutionary Society' which held frequent consultations with the military leaders of the Central powers, sent out anti-British pamphlets to Indian prisoners of war in Germany and communicated with the Indian princes on the planning of a revolt. But Hardyal was not steadfast in his loyalties and was soon discovered and discarded. He was trusted neither by his own compatriots nor by the Germans. By the time the war ended, he had undergone another conversion. In a pamphlet entitled *Forty-four months in Germany*, he set forth his war-time experiences. The tract was a long hymn of denunciation. It branded Germans as a nation of maniacs, living chronologically in the twentieth century but morally and politically in the Middle Ages. He denounced their Jingoism and warlike mentality. Of the Turks he spoke still more bitterly and scornfully, and accused them of being savages. The civilized world, he stated, would always remain at war with Ottomanism. This hatred of Germanism and Pan-Islamism was later turned against Indian Muslims. In 1925, he addressed a series of letters to *Pratap*, a Hindu daily in Lahore, advising his co-religionists to prepare for a 'fight to a finish' with their Muslim neighbours.

Hardyal had a valuable lieutenant in Maulavi Barkat Ullah. Born in Bhopal, the Maulavi memorized the Quran at an unusually early age and studied Arabic and theology. In 1890, he set out for England to work for the propagation of Islam. He wrote for magazines, translated passages from Persian and Arabic books for British orientalists, assisted the historian Lane-Poole in the preparation of one of his works, entitled *Medieval India*, and coached Arabic students for the Civil Service examinations. Going over to the United States in 1906, his work took on a political significance. He lectured on Islam and wrote a series of articles in the *Forum* on India and the Muslim world. In 1908, he was made professor of Urdu in the Tokyo School of foreign languages. In this new job, he found time to bring out a journal called the *Islamic Fraternity*. Devoted to the discussion of religion and politics, it had a modest circulation among the Indians in Japan as well as the Muslims in other oriental countries. With the help of his Japanese friends, Barkat Ullah formed an association to promote fraternal relations between Indian and Chinese Muslims. In 1911, he made a study tour through Turkey, Egypt and Russia. On his return next year, his paper was suppressed for making adverse comments on British rule in India and consequently he lost his job. The next scene of his activi-

ties was the city of San Francisco, where he joined hands with Hardyal and the Ghadar party. Elected Vice-President of the Pacific Coast Hindustan Association, he was nominated party representative on the Indian revolutionary council in Berlin. He entered Germany via Norway on an American ship. He was appointed foreign minister in the 'provisional government of India', and led the Indian part of a deputation, consisting of Indians, Turks and Germans, to Kabul to persuade the Afghan King to join the war on the side of Turkey. The mission was doomed. Every day the Germans in Kabul expected to hear of the fall of Paris and the Turks of the capture of the Suez. The Indians loudly predicted a revolutionary insurrection in their own country. Habib Ullah listened patiently. He simulated indecision, but apparently he waited for the war to take a more decisive turn. He promised to act as soon as the German and Turkish forces for the invasion of India had reached Kabul. At the same time, he faithfully reported the substance of these conversations to the Viceroy, earning an increased pension. The German members of the mission who had expected quick results were sorely disappointed. When the news arrived that the British army in India had been restored to its normal strength, Habib Ullah peremptorily asked the German members to quit. They did so in early 1916 but some of them never reached their destination. The Indian members of the mission, including Barkat Ullah stayed behind. After the revolution of 1917, the new government of the U.S.S.R. sent an envoy to Kabul and entered into a new agreement with the government of Afghanistan. The original treaty in the Persian language was drafted by Barkat Ullah. Later he paid a visit to Moscow and met Lenin. But the religious enthusiast in him was chilled by the bantering atheism of post-revolutionary Russia. He made his way back to Berlin to find the Indian community demoralized and bitterly divided against itself. He tried unsuccessfully to patch up its differences. Broken and despondent, he came to Paris and once again took to his literary pursuits. He wrote a small book on the problems of the Khilafat and edited an Arabic periodical, *Al-Islah*. But his new career was soon interrupted and he was turned out of France for his political affiliations in the past. He stayed in Switzerland and Italy for short intervals and ultimately reached California to die a lonesome exile. Jawaharlal Nehru, who met him in 1927, described him as 'a delightful old man, likable and enthusiastic, simple and not very intelligent', and as one who was 'trying to imbibe new ideas and to understand the present day world'.[15]

Another outstanding character in the revolutionary drama was Mohindra Pratap, a scion of Sikh aristocracy, who arrived in Switzerland just a few days after the outbreak of war. He was an eccentric of imperious temper, who could speak several European languages fluently. Discovered by Hardyal, he was presented to the Kaiser. He became the president of the German-sponsored 'provisional government of India,' acquiring exaggerated ideas of the prerogatives of this office. The members of the government were required to take an oath of allegiance to him personally. Although he described himself as a humanitarian and talked a lot about democracy, he was, in fact, a

narrow-minded bigot and an incurable autocrat. He was a member of the abortive Berlin mission to Kabul. It was at Kabul that Mohindra Pratap exhibited his worst side. He was ambitious and high-handed. Apprehending that direct contacts between the German members of his mission and the Indian revolutionaries in Kabul would reduce his own importance, he tried to stop all communication between the two. His hatred of Muslims was unrelenting. He would give them no quarter and declared that they had no place in India. When the Indian members of the Berlin mission decided to establish diplomatic relations with Russia, Mohindra Pratap torpedoed the plan by an all-out insistence upon his own nominee, Mathra Singh, a Sikh, being sent as the only delegate. The Muslim members of the mission had no desire to be represented by a Sikh. They insisted upon a Muslim accompanying him. Differences led to a crisis. Mohindra Pratap, who had agreed to stand the expenses of his own protégé, declined to extend financial support to the second member of the party.[16] Mohindra Pratap lived well into the thirties. Jawaharlal Nehru spoke of him as 'a delightful optimist living in a world of his own creation far from reality', and 'a character out of a medieval romance' who always went about in a semi-military uniform, with high Russian boots, his countless pockets bulging with numerous papers which he was always careful to keep on his own person.[17]

Another knight of the revolutionary order, Obaid Ullah Sindhi, was born in a Sikh family. In his student days he read some books on Islam which led to his conversion at the comparatively early age of sixteen. Leaving his home and people, he joined the famous theological seminary of Deoband to receive education in his newly-discovered faith. He distinguished himself as a student, and wrote a few booklets on dogma and theology. In 1915, his preceptor, Mahmud-ul-Hasan, asked him to go to Kabul on a secret mission. The adventure did not appear feasible as he had no money on him. The wife of a friend sold her jewellery to equip him for the journey. He slipped out of Delhi quietly, travelled by an almost unknown route, and succeeded in entering Afghanistan. His assignment kept him in Kabul for about seven years. He has left a detailed and graphic account[18] of an Oriental autocracy in action with its court intrigues, suspicions and jealousies, of the coming of the Berlin mission, and the mutual distrust between the Indian revolutionaries and between the Indian and German members of the Berlin mission, of the interminable afflictions of foreigners in the country, and of his own unmerited arrest and unexpected release. He records that while the Indian members were determined to save India from the horrors of the contemplated invasion, their German colleagues cooly rejected the proposition. The debate was only theoretical, as events never reached the stage where it could assume practical importance. Sindhi made some caustic, but probably justified, comments on Barkat Ullah who struck him as a mere dupe. On important issues he found Barkat Ullah's mind to be singularly blank. Barkat Ullah could neither keep his own men in order nor could he carry others along with him. Sindhi felt disgusted with the narrow-mindedness of Mohindra Pratap, one of whose men curtly said to his

Muslim comrades, 'Join us only if you like. India is ours. We know our business'.[19]

In the revolutionary annals, Obaid Ullah is best remembered as one of the two authors of the famous 'silk letter' addressed to the divine, Mahmud-ul-Hasan, then in the Hejaz, giving an account of their activities at Kabul and urging upon him to further their scheme by securing the co-operation of the Turkish government and of the Sherif of Mecca, who had not yet rebelled against Turkey. The letter contained the details of a plan for raising an 'army of God', drawn from the various Muslim countries with its high command at Medina. Obaid Ullah insists that the military character of the army of God was much the same as that of the Salvation Army. Its purpose was to destroy British rule in India by an attack on the North-West Frontier, assisted by a Muslim rising within the country. The letter was written in Persian on a long piece of yellow silk and was sewn up inside the lining of the messenger's coat. The awkward movements of the messenger led to his arrest. The police searched his person, took possession of his coat and passed it on to the Punjab Governor, O' Dwyer, who had it deciphered by the secret service, and thus strengthened the precautions against the intended insurrection. Obaid Ullah stayed in Kabul till the end of the war and established a branch of the Indian National Congress in Kabul. He arrived in India in 1939 after visiting the U.S.S.R. and Turkey, and died five years later.

In February 1915, some fifteen students coming from well-known families disappeared simultaneously from Lahore and Peshawar. For some time nothing was heard of their whereabouts. But they were known to have stopped with the anti-British Wahabis of the tribal belt, called the *mujahidin*, and were believed to be on their way to Kabul en route for Turkey to fight against the Allies. When they reached Kabul, Habib Ullah had them interned. Released on the intervention of the anti-British faction at the Afghan court, they were set to work under the direction of Mohindra Pratap and Barkat Ullah, who put them on different jobs. Some were sent to Turkey, others to Persia, China and Japan. Some lost their lives as homeless wanderers and some fell into Allied hands and were executed as traitors. Those with powerful connections at home were pardoned.

A very different kind of trouble originated from the Pacific coast of North America where thousands of Indian immigrants, chiefly Sikhs, had settled down in recent years, being attracted by the free lumber trade in Vancouver and British Columbia. The Canadian immigration law was harsh. It subjected the immigrants to manifold disabilities. Three Sikh 'delegates' arrived from Canada in 1914 to mobilize Indian opinion against the iniquitous measure. The Punjab Governor, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, realized that the real purpose of the visit was to prepare the ground for the rebellion that was brewing in India. These were the first arrivals. But as the war progressed, shiploads of Indian revolutionaries began to return from abroad. They were sturdy and self-confident, fearless and fully armed. They were convinced that British rule was drawing to an end. This eruption presented the alien Government with a desperate problem. It could not afford to let them

go about the country with impunity nor could it resort to an indiscriminate use of third-degree methods against a particularly contumacious group. A hurried inquiry was held into the antecedents of every immigrant. As a result of this check-up, hundreds were lodged in jails. Others were restricted to their villages and the rest were let off with warnings. The peculiar conditions under which the first consignment of this revolutionary cargo was unloaded will serve to illustrate their methods. The hero of this expedition was Gurdit Singh a Sikh revolutionary who had emigrated from India some fifteen years before and had taken to business in Malaya and Singapore. He wielded considerable influence with his fellow Sikhs in America and the Far East. He schemed, probably under German instigation, to create an imbroglio by dramatically dumping some four hundred Sikhs on Canadian soil in defiance of the immigration law. Through a German agent he chartered a Japanese ship, *Komagatu Maru*, to implement the plan. When the ship carrying this inflamatory human material reached its destination, the passengers found the gateway firmly closed and vigilantly guarded. The Canadian authorities refused admission to all those who could not satisfy the requirements of law. Thus a large majority was going to be left out. The 'invaders' flared up. They refused to be separated and threatened to starve themselves to death if they were not allowed to go ashore in a body and become citizens. The threat was immediately put into effect. None of them would touch food or drink. Gurdit Singh alone was eating in order to keep up his bodily and mental strength to negotiate intelligently. The port officials were resolute and refused to be bullied, and the hunger strike had to be abandoned. The ship was provisioned with food and medicines and sent back to India where it anchored at Hugly. After two long, tedious and unsuccessful voyages, the passengers were brusque and surly. Most of them were ruined, as they had lost everything in this wild-goose chase. Arrangements made for their reception and dispersion were bad. In the confusion that followed, many, including Gurdit Singh who remained at large for over a decade, escaped. This and the following arrivals acted like a match to a powder keg. Murders and gang robberies became more frequent. Several bomb factories under revolutionary control were unearthed. A huge stock of pistols and ammunition from a military store was stolen through the connivance of a petty magazine official. The weapons were subsequently discovered to have found their way to the remotest corners of the country. Disturbing military incidents were reported from different commands. Of these, the mutiny of an Indian regiment at Singapore proved to be nearly disastrous.

The years of war were years of unabashed repression. The Indian Defence of the Realm Act was far more rigorous than its British analogue. It had a difficult passage through the legislature for the elected members voiced uncompromising opposition to it. The Government used, or rather abused, its official majority to prevent the 'efficiency' of the bill from being destroyed. All amendments designed to soften its cruel features were out-voted. As it emerged finally, the law gave the Executive wide powers of rule-making together with an almost un-

limited discretion to intern without trial. It lowered the standards of evidence and provided for the creation of special tribunals for the speedy disposal of revolutionary crime in disturbed areas. Its ruthless provisions were enforced without sufficient discrimination. Investigating authorities sat in camera, permitted no counsels to appear before them, inquired into undefined charges, dealt with undisclosed evidence, and submitted reports that were never made public. Savage sentences were invariably passed against the accused. Hardinge has told us that one such 'special' judicial tribunal sitting in camera at Lahore sentenced all the twenty-four accused in a 'conspiracy' to death, whereas only six of them had been actually proved guilty. The Viceroy declined to allow 'a holocaust of victims'.[20] How many 'holocausts' went unnoticed no one can tell. The police employed its *agents provocateurs* for tracing crime, pounced upon people and searched their houses for fire-arms. As volunteers were not coming forward to enlist in the army, the Government created conditions akin to conscription in certain areas. Its recruitment drives had much in common with the old press-gang methods of the English in French wars. It became customary for the village youth to enlist, report at a training centre and then desert at the first convenient opportunity.[21] For the rest it was a dull and depressing tale of transportations, and of official terrorism in which Muslim suffering was the heaviest.

4

WHILE the War was going on, the hangman's noose was being tightened round Turkey's neck. British victories over her adversary were not all military. They were largely political. By degrees, Ottoman Turkey was squeezed between diplomatic and military pincers. To begin with, Egypt was declared a protectorate. Her Khediv was exiled and a 'Sultan' placed on the throne. The new title was not without purpose. It indicated British anxiety to transfer the Khilafat to someone who could be 'better trusted', or at least, to set up a rival Khilafat. Turkey's influence in the Muslim world was built upon her association with the *Khilafat*. Deprived of that she would be of little consequence. The idea first of all came from the British Press. At the same time, the military ring around the Arab provinces of Turkey was closed, and the Red Sea coast blockaded. Arms were landed at Rabegh, and Jeddah was seized while the promised immunity of Baghdad, Najaf and Karbala had already been infringed. But the worst was yet to come.

Instigated by a host of British agents like Clayton and Lawrence, who continuously encouraged Arab nationalism, the Sherif of Mecca successfully revolted against the Turks in June 1916. The Sherif, Husain, was the chief of the Arabs in the Hejaz, and belonged to the Kureish tribe to which the Prophet himself belonged. For a considerable period in the past, the Sherifs of Mecca had acknowledged the Khilafat of the Sultans of Turkey in return for general protection and heavy subsidies. The relations between the two had so far been harmonious, so the Muslims of India were shocked at the rebellion particularly because the rebels were supported by British warships.

Immediately after the destruction of Turkish authority, Husain assumed the title of 'King' with British concurrence. The Sultans of Turkey had never assumed the 'Kingship' of Arab lands. They had been content merely to call themselves the 'servants of the holy places'. The Sherif lost no time in releasing a long charge-sheet against the Turks blaming them for irreligion and departure from the principles of the Holy Book. The statement was plainly inspired by Husain's new masters. It was also clear that the Sherif was totally incapable of maintaining an independent state. Muslim opinion condemned the Arab rebels headed by the Sherif of Mecca and their sympathisers as enemies of Islam.

Earlier and secretly, by a treaty in 1915, Britain started 'dividing the bear's skin before the bear was slain.' She promised Constantinople to Russia in the belief that this country would prove to be the invincible arbiter of the war. After the collapse of Tsardom, it was promised to Greece. One after another, vast regions of the Ottoman empire passed under Allied control. In the later phases of the war, they were pledged to different claimants. Most of these promises were mutually destructive. The commitments with Sherif Husain were at variance with the Balfour declaration of 1917. Both of these were in conflict with an Anglo-French understanding to share these areas as spheres of influence. When these transactions gradually became public, the Muslims awoke to the seriousness of Turkey's plight.

5

IT WILL be recalled that British politicians had been vocal about the 'readjustment' of India's relations with Britain when the war began. But in the more difficult times ahead, India practically ceased to exist for them. Both Hardinge and the Secretary of State for India, Chamberlain, though men of ability, were lacking in imagination. They were too diffident to force their views on an overburdened cabinet. Under the pressure of war conditions, India soon grew weary and suspicious and with the death of Gokhale in 1915, the greatest moderating influence was removed from political life. The 'no controversy' understanding soon broke down and politics resumed their former intensity. The demand for a fully autonomous India was voiced again. In the rising tumult, the report of the Mesopotamia Commission fell like a bombshell. The commission had been appointed to investigate into the failure of the campaign of Tigris (London had entrusted the overall conduct of this campaign to India) where the British armies had surrendered fourteen thousand prisoners. It wrote a crushing condemnation of the fatal inefficiency of the over-centralized and cumbrous administrative machinery of the Government of India. Its incredible disclosures blew up the prestige of bureaucracy. Chamberlain was swept out of office. The Commander-in-Chief of the Army in India was recalled. The feeling grew that a drastic overhauling of the governmental system in India could not be wholly postponed till the end of the war. Montagu, who had acquired some knowledge of India as a junior Minister and had leapt into the limelight by an indiscreet con-

demnation of the Government of India in the Commons' debate on Mesopotamia, succeeded Chamberlain. The appointment was hailed with delight in India. Next year, came the long-awaited report of the Public Service Commission, a cold, colourless traditional document. It re-enunciated the old offensive argument that the nature of British responsibility required the continued employment of a preponderant proportion of British officials in the higher ranks of Civil and Police services and turned down the plea for equality of pay scales between the British and Indian members of the administrative services. The flood-gates of controversy were opened.

Let us go back for a moment to the autumn of 1916 when Mrs Besant took a plunge into politics. The wife of an English clergyman, she started as an atheist pamphleteer, and gradually gravitated into Socialism. She came to India in 1893 to work with Mr Hume, the father of the Congress and the pioneer of Theosophy in India. The new association awakened in her a keen sympathy for Hinduism and its revival, which gave still another direction to her interests. She next appeared in the role of an educationist and founded the Central Hindu College in Benares in 1898 in a small house with a few boys. Her energy and capacity for organization were marvellous. The institution flourished remarkably and expanded into a university. When she came to politics, she was already a name to conjure with in Hindu society. She ran two newspapers of her own of which *New India* was the better known. Her many-sided gifts would have made her a formidable politician but she did not make this rash beginning. She appealed, first and foremost, to the youth among whom she had worked so long and whose psychology she understood so well. Anxious to strike their imagination, she raised the cry of 'Home Rule'. This term was borrowed from Irish history, but she did not wish to imitate Irish methods. She made a spectacular show of sympathy with the Allied cause and fervently exhorted the people to enlist in the army and swell the forces of freedom. Assisted by Tilak, she started the Home Rule League on 3 September 1916. The League attracted all sects of politicians, radical as well as conservative. Though its numbers were small and its activities mainly confined to the south of India, it was exceedingly vocal. It flooded the country with pamphlets and brought the constitutional issue to the fore once again.

6

THE assemblies set up under the Minto-Morley Reforms proved to be sham parliaments with little power. Their views were often set aside by the Government. Whatever influence they exerted was indirect. It became habitual with the authorities to make concessions in private discussions and conferences but seldom as a result of public debate. The results were well brought out by a shrewd observer:

> Is it humanly possible, if this system be long continued, that the Executives will resist the temptation to influence non-official members by means other than pure argument in open debate? Wherever this

system has been long continued, government by 'influence' has set in, degrading into government by intrigue, and ending in government by corruption.[22]

Even before the outbreak of war, an agitation for 'another step forward' had begun.

In October 1916, nineteen out of twenty-seven elected members of the Indian Legislature drafted a 'declaration of rights'. It was almost the first Indian attempt at constitution-making, the first political document to which both Hindus and Muslims appended their signatures and almost the first event of political importance in the new Viceroyalty of Chelmsford (Hardinge had left in early 1916). Crude and hastily drafted, it was popularly called the Scheme of the Nineteen. It was presented to the Viceroy as an irreducible minimum of political freedom for India. It demanded elected majorities in legislatures, complete control over the budget and a large reduction in the regulating powers of the India Office. The foundations of a League-Congress entente were laid at the end of 1915 when both organizations held their annual sessions at the same time and in the same city, a practice which was to continue till 1921. Resentment against Britain drove the Muslims to desperation and to the Congress. The first fruit of this alliance was the celebrated Lucknow Pact which was avowedly based on the Scheme of the Nineteen. The crucial test of a constitution, as seen by the Muslims, was not its formal structure but its ability to satisfy the demand for actual participation in the government. The community preferred an asymmetrical system answering its needs to a structure built on theoretical perfection. This was the essence of the Simla demand of 1906. In the atmosphere of growing cordiality, the Hindu opposition to separate electorates had lost much of its vitriolic quality and the community was now in a mood to compromise on the question. In the negotiations that followed the Hindus drove the harder bargain. They accepted separate electorates in principle. But this approval lost much of its value for the Muslims by other provisions of the pact by which the seats in the different legisatures were so distributed that Muslims were relegated to the status of an equality with other communities in the Punjab and a minority in Bengal, the two provinces in which they had narrow majorities. The contracting parties further laid down the principle that if two-thirds of the membership of either community in a legislature were opposed to a bill or a measure, it was to be dropped by both. A constitutional provision of this nature, calculated to leave things very much where they were, was indispensable in a sub-continent with the dimensions and complexities of India where the best form of government is not government by majority but government by consensus. The details of the agreement were drafted at the residence of Pandit Motilal Nehru and were confirmed by both League and Congress. The Congress-League scheme, as it now came to be called, was adopted by almost all political groups in the country and the two political parties worked in close co-operation. It would be truer to say that there was only one political party in the country for the next five years. Organizational

labels differed, but objectives, war cries, and slogans were the same. This unity, it may be emphasized, was brought about by the war-time errors of the administration.

Meanwhile repression continued. Mrs Besant and two of her lieutenants were interned for their activities. Gandhi was arrested on his way to Bihar to inquire into the grievances of indigo labour. Provincial governments issued circulars explaining the impossibility of an early achievement of self-government. Matters came to a head by the leakage of a Government of India order instructing stern suppression of Home Rule propaganda, the invectives of Sir Michael O'Dwyer on the Indian leaders' callousness in demanding self-government before the return of peace and the increased activity of the Civil Services and the British mercantile community who opposed all schemes of political advance affecting their business or disturbing their privileges. The growing number of seizures and confiscations under the Press Law furnished yet another argument against the genuineness of Britain's professions. The senseless refusal of the Baden-Powell organization to permit the enrolment of Indians came as a dismal reminder of undying racialism. The Government cancelled the passports issued to the Home Rule Leaguers for a propaganda tour in Britain. Economic conditions aggravated this political situation. Britain's heavy shipping losses restricted trade. Supplies ran short and profiteering became rife. Enormous quantities of food-stuffs were shipped out of the country to feed the fighting forces, while the failure of the monsoons gave rise to famine conditions. Important commodities of daily use and raw materials of military necessity were controlled and these controls worked scandalously. The cruel ravages of a virulent epidemic of influenza exhausted the patience of a tired, wearied, and long suffering people. Suddenly a change came over responsible leaders in almost all parts of the country. They adopted a firmer attitude. An eminent jurist from South India wrote a letter to President Wilson complaining that India was a subject nation held in chains, forbidden to express publicly her desire for ideals proclaimed in the President's famous war message. A number of leading politicians in the United Provinces withdrew from a recruiting rally on receiving the news of Mrs Besant's detention. The Home Rulers of Bombay walked out of a public meeting presided over by the Governor in which a motion on self-government was ruled out of order. At Lahore, Fazl-i-Husain declined to attend a conference where he was not permitted to mention the popular demand. Mistrust of the Government's sincerity was expressed by all. India was no longer the exclusive concern of Britain for the war had linked her with outside world. Gradually, the ruinous consequences of continued delay dawned on Britain and on 20 August 1917 came the Imperial announcement on the subject of India's future. Montagu told the House of Commons, among other things, that the goal of British policy in India was 'The gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India, as an integral part of the British Empire.' The announcement was made in a casual and off-hand manner in answer to a parliamentary question. In its background smouldered

the advancing Home Rule movement, the truculences of Indian politicians, the anarchist danger within, and the German threat without. If made two years earlier, it would surely have propitiated the educated classes, but the delay rendered it ineffective. Besides, its phraseology was unduly guarded and its tone utterly devoid of warmth. The goal of self-government was to be achieved by slow degrees and the British Parliament was to be the sole judge of 'the time and measure of each advance.'[23] In determining the extent of every further advance, Parliament was to be guided by 'the co-operation received from those upon whom new opportunities of service will be conferred and by the extent to which it is found that confidence can be reposed on their sense of responsibility.' This meant that each grant was to be conditional and dependent on the behaviour of the grantee. The threat of reversion was obviously implied. Altogether, the conditions of candidacy to responsible government under British patronage were far from edifying. Finally, 'the responsibility for the welfare and advancement of Indian people' was to remain with the British Parliament. This was a euphemistic way of saying that India had not yet come of age and that her people could not be entrusted with the management of their own affairs.

While the announcement failed to restore confidence, Indian opinion was further outraged by the frequent discussions in British journals of an ambitious federation of the British Empire in which India would be subjected not only to Great Britain, but the Greater Britain of colonies with their mendacious assertions of racial superiority. This suspicion was confirmed by the publication of Mr Curtis' letter proposing India's subordination to an Imperial Council in her internal and external affairs.

Accompanied by two colleagues of the India Council, Lord Donoughmore and Mr Charles Roberts, Montagu landed in Bombay in November 1917, being the first Secretary of State to visit India for a purely political purpose. Desirous of promoting an atmosphere of calmness for the consideration of his proposals, he ordered the release of Mrs. Besant and called upon Sir Michael O'Dwyer to tender a public apology for a particularly nasty utterance against the politicians. After a preliminary conference with the Government of India and heads of provinces at Delhi, his party, including the Viceroy, went round the principal cities of India. Everywhere, they consulted with officials and political leaders. In the course of the tour, which lasted for six months and which attracted considerable public attention, numerous associations presented addresses to the Secretary, reiterating their faith in the Congress-League scheme. The material gathered from interviews, addresses and deputations was shaped into a report whose conclusions were not based on inductive reasoning. In fact the available evidence was sifted and rearranged to lead to conclusions formulated while Montagu was yet in England. The central idea of the new scheme, generally known as the Montagu-Chemlsford scheme, had emanated from the fertile brain of Lionel Curtis, a member of the Round Table club who had, for several years before the War, studied in conjunction with a number of friends, the mutual relations of Britain and the Dominions. India was not a part of the original investigation. But the circle, whose members were enthusiastic exponents of the

Imperial idea, soon felt that the Indian problem blocked the way to the British Commonwealth of their conception. So they turned their attention to India. Curtis himself came to the country in October 1916 to see things personally. From what he saw he concluded that the point had been reached where the transfer of the control of Indian affairs to the people of India must be initiated. Curtis secured many adherents to his scheme, Montagu among them.

Montagu's report, issued on 6 July 1918, was sincere and sympathetic but neither logical nor complete. It propounded a transitional scheme to acclimatize India to democracy and looked forward to the gradual contraction of Parliamentary control over India. Rejecting federation as impracticable, it granted original powers to provinces and reduced their dependence on the central Government. It located the province as the most suitable field for launching what may be called a controlled experiment in democracy. Mr Curtis had observed: 'We can only learn to be just by having opportunities of injustice, and the way for all of us . . . to get things done is to endure the results of our own neglect in not getting them done.'

This maxim was embodied in a complex scheme of divided government which transferred certain specified heads of administration to popular control. The executive government of a province was to consist of a Governor, by no means a constitutional head, an Executive Council of two to four (one-half of whom were to be Indians) and one or more Ministers chosen by the Governor from amongst elected members of the legislature. The Executive Council was to deal with the more important subjects, called 'Reserved Subjects', such as law and order and was to be answerable to Parliament. The Ministers were to direct 'Transferred' departments of 'nation-building' significance, like education, public health and agriculture. The Governor was to consult with Councillors and Ministers separately. The decisions on Reserved Subjects were to come from the Councillors and on Transferred Subjects from the Ministers. Theoretically, the supremacy of bureaucracy was gone. The Indian share in superior services was fixed at thirty-two per cent. Large and backward areas were exempted from the operation of these reforms. As the English language could furnish no word to describe this ingenious system of government, the expression 'Dyarchy' was coined.

Whole batteries of criticism were turned against the scheme; some said that it went too far; others called it retrograde. It was democratic only in form. The eventualities of its breakdown were foreseen and provided for, the Governor being given extensive over-riding powers. This arrangement left the Councillors and Ministers free to pull in opposite directions. The Bill giving effect to the Montagu report was introduced in the House of Commons in June 1919 and was passed into law a couple of months later. Whatever their limitations, the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms represented a genuine advance on the Minto-Morley scheme. It will be remembered that, in his own days, Morley could not be made to visualize parliamentary government in India even as a remote prospect. In ten years' time it became the approved pattern. Morley questioned the serviceability of the Canadian fur coat

for the tropical climate of India. His successors, who had no such doubts, took credit for marching with the times.

As expected, the Anglo-Indian community and the British die-hards were livid with rage. The campaign of hate against Montagu started on the day he left for India. He was called a 'British Bolshevik', 'a wandering Jew', and 'a wild elephant on catching operations'. Some critics sneered at his arrival as the most remarkable event in the history of India since the invasion of Alexander the Great. Retired pro-consuls stated and restated the crude doctrine that Britain alone had the necessary force and requisite efficiency to govern India. Lord Sydenham, an active member of this distinguished order, publicly declared that no man of intelligence and self-respect would care to accept high office in India under the new conditions.[24] The Indo-British Association of London brought out a queer pamphlet entitled *Indian Opposition to Home Rule: What the British ought to know.* Its foreword stated that in every province millions of uneducated and depressed classes were ready to bear testimony to their deep conviction of the beneficent character of British supramacy. It spoke at some length of the alarm created by radical and premature political reform 'among the vast majority of Indian people', although this vast majority was aware of the reforms under discussion only by hearsay. But the most ridiculous part of the brochure was the one which carried extracts from an 'appeal from poor villagers who knew nothing about self-government', drafted in faultless English on the operations of railways and shipping and about the vested interests of British merchants. It also reproduced remarks alleged to have been made by Indians themselves to the effect that the grant of political rights would seduce men from science and art.[25] There was nothing unusual in all this. Every big change has its detractors who derive strength from every straw they can snatch at. But it is no impertinent reflection that Britain has always made political concessions to India under duress and seldom as a voluntary gesture, always in the teeth of tearing and raging British opposition at home and never as agreed measures of national policy.

7

THE World War ended and yet another wave of unrest swept the country, for the misery of the people was unrelieved. The scarcity of food led to industrial strikes which were broken harshly. Soldiers returning home from the battle-front were disinclined to put up with autocratic repression. The people accused the British of ingratitude and expressed their fears that Britain, now victorious, would avenge the wrongs suffered at the hands of revolutionaries. This belief was confirmed when the Chelmsford government decided to strengthen the machinery of law against revolutionary terrorism. The stringent provisions of the Indian DORA made this quite unnecessary. They could be as effectively used now as they had been during the war. But this Act was due to expire six months after the official termination of the war, which was still distant. The Government was in haste and could not be prevailed upon to wait. It was anxious to put the DORA teeth into

the ordinary law of the land. This ill-advised step was prompted by the recommendations of an investigating committee of jurists, called the Indian Sedition Committee, presided over by a British judge, Rowlatt, who had held a secret probe into revolutionary crime. The report popularly known as the Rowlatt Report published on 15 August 1917, included a survey of revolutionary crime in India from 1907 to 1917 with special emphasis on the worst affected areas of the Punjab and Bengal. It gave details of the German intrigues, of the anarchical Indian activities in Europe and America, of the cargoes of arms received from abroad, of the revolutionary methods and techniques and of the anti-British zeal of Muslim associations working in the open or in secret. It also drew attention to the lacunae in the law of evidence which hindered expeditious retribution of revolutionary enormities and advised the amendment of the penal code on the lines of the war-time law without going into the constitutional competence of the legislature to enact the drastic mandate. However, the law officers of the Government drafted two measures which met with violent popular opposition. Of these two, the first one passed on 18 March 1918 provided for the speedy disposal of revolutionary crime by setting aside normal procedure. It authorized the creation of special tribunals whose judges, sitting in camera, were permitted to accept, at their discretion, statements of the dead or the missing against the accused, who had no right of appeal. It also gave wide, almost arbitrary, powers of detention to the Executive. The legislature resisted the Bill fiercely. The opposition was not disarmed by the Government promise of allowing the law to lapse after three years. Amendments designed to delay its passage were supported by every Indian member and rejected by the solid official vote. It was a blunder to have forced it through a hostile legislature. The Act proved to be still-born, as it was never enforced. It could not be enforced, though its evil worked and multiplied. The second Bill, which was never passed, was even more repressive. A well-known British publicist, B.G. Horniman, called it a 'prodigious gag'. It controverted the established legal principle which presumes every one to be innocent unless proved otherwise. It made the possession of a seditious document, intended for publication or circulation, punishable with a long term of imprisonment, shifting the onus of proof from the prosecution to the accused. Under its elastic provisions even a scrap of waste paper used to wrap grocery could be construed into a 'seditious' document.

While they were before the legislature, these amazing and vindictive measures, seemed to open up a long vista of legalized terrorism and caused deep consternation. Their severity united both the moderate and extremist elements among politicians. Chelmsford was warned from many a quarter that he was heading for disaster. Gandhi, who had previously rebuked the intemperate tendencies of Home Rulers and advised unconditional co-operation with the Government as the only avenue to Home Rule, could no longer restrain himself. From his sick-bed, he begged of the Viceroy to reconsider the issue. But Chelmsford was curiously insensitive. The historiographer of the Government of India speaks the common language of bureau-

crats when he complains that the Bills were misrepresented. He asserts that popular resentment was artificial and merely based on sentiment, as if sentiments should have no place in human affairs. The Government defended itself as best as it could, printing copies of the Bills at public cost and distributing them in order to bring out what was believed to be their innocuous character. The Government also gave an undertaking to apply the measures with scrupulous care. The assurance failed to allay suspicions. The bills strangely contrasted with the recently announced scheme of liberal and constitutional Reforms and exposed the Government to the charge of duplicity. Thus they became the symbol of oppression and a focus of popular grievance.

Gandhi's appeal having failed, he started preparing for a gigantic agitation. The technique of this agitation had been perfected in South Africa in a fight against racialism. It was popularly called 'passive resistance', a name that its author would not accept. He preferred to call it by its Hindi name of *Satyagraha*. *Satyagraha*, as Gandhi himself explained, is a doctrine as well as a practical method of breaking tyranny. Doctrinally, it asserts the superiority of soul-force over material might, and expects its votaries to banish evil thought and refrain from violence. In practice the *Satyagrahi* is under a moral obligation to thwart every iniquity and withstand every unjust law whose breach does not involve moral turpitude. He braves the consequences silently and suffers to the utmost without hitting back. An association, called *Satyagraha Sabha*, was brought into existence, with forbidding conditions of membership. Only a select few were allowed to enrol, while sympathizers were expected to lend moral support. Every member took a vow to defy as many restrictive laws as he could. The Viceroy was duly notified and the movement was launched amidst a *hartal* and turbulent public demonstrations on 6 April 1919. The demonstrators were drawn from all classes. The time-honoured religious barriers collapsed. The Hindus and Muslims fraternizing, went freely to each others' places of worship. Unity was achieved, as if by a miracle However, the peaceful career of the movement was short-lived. It soon turned into mob violence at the hands of less austere political workers. The first outbreak of disorder occurred at Delhi, where by a curious mistake *Satyagraha* was started a week ahead of the schedule. The military fired several rounds on an indignant crowd demanding the release of two volunteers who had been arrested for forcing a particularly defiant refreshment vendor at the railway station to suspend his business.

The storm which had been gathering for long at last burst forth. The unrestrained repression of war years had hardened the people and brutalized the authorities. The two were violently at loggerheads with each other. The Government refused to drop the demand for exceptional powers to exorcise the spirit of rebellion out of the people. It gravely underestimated the strength of popular feeling and its own limitations. Unhappily, at this critical juncture the reins of Government were held by the singularly inflexible and unimaginative Chelmsford, a Unionist peer, lawyer by profession and soldier by virtue of war-time conscription. His background was colourless and his political

horizon limited. As a member of the London Country Council, he had done some useful work in the organization and administration of education. As an apprentice in politics, he had filled the office of Governor in two Australian States. That gave him neither distinction nor experience. He was selected for Viceroyalty because no front-rank politician was willing to shoulder the burden. When fortune smiled on him, he was an unknown quantity and yet his years were to synchronize with the most fateful period of British rule in India.

Montagu has left us a vivid pen picture of the man and the Government he headed. He has compared the Government of India to a dead hand, too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, blighting and consuming everything it touched. Its haughty and insolent bureaucrats were blind to the signs of the times and oblivious of the rising political flood. They were victims of self-delusion and narcissism, regarding their own work as the last word on efficiency. They dreaded constitutional innovations as suicidal. One dignitary openly advocated five years of strong government. He asserted that it would be a greater boon to the country than a scheme of Reforms. The Government was out of touch with the people and was immersed in files. An atmosphere of extreme formality prevailed at the Viceregal court. A *Manchester Guardian* journalist who had come all the way from England to discuss India's political problems with the Viceroy missed the only opportunity of meeting him for want of the prescribed dinnerjacket.[26]

Chelmsford's gentlemanliness, patience, self-control, conscientiousness, and receptivity drew an ungrudging tribute from the most exacting judges of men. Despite the greatest physical fatigue, he did not lose his urbanity of manner. But each one of these qualities was negatived by a lack of vigour and personality. His mental processes were very slow. Not having any convictions, he was incapable of taking the initiative. He could seldom express an opinion on any subject without consulting someone. On one occasion he wrote a speech for the legislature and circulated the draft to his Council for comments. Everyone suggested amendments all of which were adopted, leaving very little of the original speech itself. He was indefinite, timid, shy and a shirker of responsibility. He was afraid of giving offence even to his subordinates. That is why he requested Montagu to communicate his complaint to Sir Michael O'Dwyer about the unruly conduct of Punjab officials. Whenever a course of action was suggested to him, he invariably came out with the answer, 'I wish it were possible, but I am afraid . . . .' These words summed him up in almost everything. Suggestions evoked no response from him. He did not even criticize. During the greatest issue of his life, when the scheme of the constitution bearing his name was being discussed, he did nothing except sit and wait.[27] He could neither say no, nor get things done. Unable to find a worthier occupation, he interested himself in such trivialities as Princely precedence at social functions and the proper procedure for numbering motor cars in their states.[28] He insisted that all communications from his Government should be called despatches and not letters. When the final draft of the Montagu report was being discussed, Chelmsford took his turn

in reading aloud its paragraphs, but his contribution merely amounted to 'such speculations as to whether the Government of India is a plural or singular noun'. When this document came up for signatures, he was troubled with the problem of priority in signing it. He insisted on affixing his signatures before those of Montagu, as he was the man on the spot.[29] Such was the man controlling the destinies of the sub-continent.

Equally disastrous was the stewardship of the Punjab by Sir Michael O'Dwyer whose province was the heart of the trouble and a scene of much oppression. A peep into the working of his mind will help an understanding of what was to come. His autobiography, *India as I knew It*, is a good resume of the political philosophy of the clan of Anglo-Indian rulers of India, among whom he cut a distinguished figure. Montagu described him as long, pugnacious and narrow. Like many a sun-burnt bureaucrat, O'Dwyer had a studied contempt for the educated classes. He regarded an efficient autocracy with iron heels and spurs as the most effective weapon of British rule in India. He frankly asserts that the dominion in India was carved by the sword and that it could scarcely be retained by the faint-hearted. He had an immutable faith in the efficacy of his crude and ruthless methods and believed them to be safe and humane in the long run. He was quick to reward and quicker to chastise. His motto given him by one of his friends was: 'that government can never hope to endure whose friends have nothing to expect and enemies nothing to fear'. He equated his petty whims with realities and the opinions of his critics with shams. His choicest shafts were directed against the doctrine of political expediency and its exponents who wanted to put a stop to the efficient terrorism which he had so freely practised on the pretext of emergency. He could not reconcile himself to the meetings between the Viceroy and Montagu and leaders of Indian political opinion whose only place, he thought, was the gaol. The martinet in him was impatient and distrustful of lawyers. Members of the profession, intending to conduct the legal defence of political offenders, were warned of the consequences. He had his own reasons, by no means creditable to the dispensers of justice, for praising the Punjab judges who had 'assisted' the Executive in giving a short shrift to the revolutionaries. He would not have anything to do with reforms and constitution-making while the war was yet on. He even thought that the country and its people were unworthy of self-government. 'Self-government had no equivalent in any Indian language', he discovered. He did not permit a single branch of the Home Rule League to be formed in his province and ridiculed the idea of Indians aspiring to commissioned ranks in the army. He spoke in the name of the dumb masses and the 'man behind the plough'. He gloated over the illusory and short-lived prosperity of the peasantry but made no mention of its acute economic distress. Not even a peasants' revolt would convince him of their woeful plight. He would have promptly laid it at the door of 'unscrupulous politicians'. To him every Indian politician was a liar. But throughout his narrative, he appears to accept the blatant sychophancy of his Indian hangers-on at its face value. He banned the entry into his province of every politi-

cal leader and suppressed the most popular newspapers. The whole of the province became a vast prison-house during his regime. He freely dabbled in the wranglings of political factions in the province. Those who advocated self-government were an eyesore to him. He castigated them as a set of ambitious men 'eager for power and notoriety'. Talking to an Indian acquaintance about Gandhi's resistance to the Rowlatt Bills, he flew into a temper, clenched his fist, and banged the table saying: 'there is a force mightier than (Gandhi's) soulforce'. His totalitarian methods made war subscriptions voluntary only in name, but actually they were mercilessly extorted. Comparatively poor people who refused to pay were, in many cases, assessed for excess profits tax, though they were never assessed for ordinary income tax.[30]

Chelmsford and O'Dwyer sat at the steering wheel of the state and were supposed to guide the course of events. A whole population driven to despair had rebelled. Chelmsford was best suited for more tranquil times where his social gifts would show him at the maximum advantage. He was 'a sort of a Merovingian King, controlled and directed by the civilian mayors of the palace', least fitted for the dreadful situation in which he found himself. With his negative qualities, he would be most willing to surrender direction and responsibility to anyone capable of wielding them. Sir Michael fitted into this role admirably. Chelmsford gave him too much latitude and allowed him to use his opportunity as thoroughly as a Stafford would have done. By no means stricken with conscience, he later quailed before his own excesses. He was to disown responsibility for the very acts committed under his direction and in collaboration with himself.

8

TROUBLE broke out in the Punjab, first of all, in the city of Amritsar on 9 April where a magistrate ordered firing upon an agitated crowd heading towards the residence of the district officer in protest against the arrest of two political leaders. The use of force let loose the frenzy of the mob who resorted to indiscriminate sabotage and incendiarism. It burnt public buildings, removed railway tracks, cut off telegraph wires, looted banks and killed a few Europeans. In a state of helpless confusion the divisional commissioner handed over the city to the military commander Dyer although he had not the constitutional authority to do so. Martial Law, however, was not proclaimed till after the irrevocable happenings of 13 April. Military pickets patrolled the city and reported the hostility of the people. The rebellious populace showed their contempt by spitting on the ground and raising insulting cries at the sight of British soldiers. The Martial Law administrator published a ban on all public meetings. As this ban did not receive sufficient publicity, a public meeting, organized in the now historic site, called the Jallianwala Bagh, was attended by thousands, who either intended to defy the ban or were unaware of its existence. The audience also included numerous unsuspecting villagers who had come from the neighbourhood to witness a religious fair on the day.

General Dyer went himself to the meeting place, an enclosed area with a few narrow exits, at the head of an armed force, his soldiers having sealed all the outlets. Without any apparent reason, he persuaded himself that the crowd, though unarmed, was dangerous. He ordered his men to open fire, and they, in his own words fired well and without warning. The target was the thickest part of the crowd and the shots continued till ammunition was exhausted. Some of the terrified crowd scaled the walls and fled, while the dead, nearly four hundred in number, and the wounded, remained. Firing was unnecessary since there was no possibility of dispersing the crowd imprisoned within these walls. But Dyer did exactly what humanity and commonsense forbade. Subsequently, when he was examined on his own role in the killings he would only bluster. Unblushingly he made such remarks, 'I had merely done a soldier's horrible duty', 'Maximum force was used to produce a moral effect', 'Attending to the wounded was no part of my job' and 'Hospitals were open, and they could have gone to them.' He kept back the fact that a curfew was immediately imposed on the city. No one could venture out except at the risk of being shot. The city's water and electric supplies were cut off. There was indiscriminate flogging of suspected 'traitors'. The street in which a missionary lady had been waylaid was declared to be a 'crawling lane.' Anybody who wished to go into it had to crawl through on his belly.

Events in Lahore were moving in the same direction. The city observed a *hartal* on 6 April. The people went about bareheaded in token of grief, while young men wore badges of mourning. Sir Michael O'Dwyer's high-handedness in prohibiting Gandhi's entry into the Punjab created a tense atmosphere. The *hartal* continued from day to day. Some philanthropists opened free kitchens to feed the rationless and the starving. A private army equipped with clubs called the *danda fauj* was organized. The Hindus and Muslims exaggerated their expression of solidarity. They exchanged turbans and drank from common tumblers. The Hindu leaders addressed Muslim gatherings from the pulpit of the biggest mosque. On the morning of 14 April, the arrest and deportation of a few popular leaders further maddened the people. Next day, the city, like Amritsar, passed under military rule, inaugurating a veritable reign of terror. How the new masters made their power felt will be clear from the following paragraph, which is a recital of verified facts:

> . . . . . Arrests were made by the police and the military on mere suspicion, and 789 persons were kept in custody for considerable periods without trial . . . . . the *langar khanas* (i.e. free kitchens) were closed by force. Night passes were required to be taken out by Indians . . . . . but Europeans were exempt from them. Travelling permits could only be issued at the recommendation of non-Indians. Thus an Indian could get a pass if recommended by his Anglo-Indian chauffeur or butler, but not on his own representation. All Indians were required to deliver their motor-cars, bicycles, tongas, and electric fans to Europeans for their use. In order to punish those who had been taking part in political movements, and particularly lawyers, Martial Law notices were posted

on their houses, and they were required to preserve them, in default of which severe penalties were ordained . . . . . Students were subjected to great indignities and humiliation; in some colleges parades were called four times a day in the hot sun, and the military arrangements for roll call under the shadow of bayonets—soldiers were placed between each row of students—and machine-guns (placed at the end of each row) were . . . . . made to humiliate them, and touch their imagination, rather than secure peace and good order. Flogging in public was resorted to. No two Indians were allowed to walk abreast, nor were more than ten persons permitted to collect in any one place. All Indians, no matter of which position, were required to *salaam* (i.e. greet in humility) Europeans . . . . .[31]

In two other Punjab towns violent mobs repeated the same story. They burnt railway stations, railway bridges, courts of law and post offices. The Martial Law authorities retaliated by indiscriminate bombing, flogging, wholesale arrests and punishments by summary courts. The Government of India rejected a proposal to associate civilian magistrates in the administration of Martial Law on the ground that responsibility rested solely with the army. Disorders also broke out at Ahmadabad and Bombay but were held within limits by self-restraint on the part of the police who allowed the leaders to go to the mobs and pacify them.

The ugly accretions of a movement, which was essentially intended to be spiritual in character, scared its author, Gandhi, into repentance. He called off the *Satyagraha*, confessing that he had underrated the forces of evil and miscalculated the extent of the people's discipline. He characterized his action as a 'Himalayan blunder', but added that resistance to the monstrous bills was a moral duty. The *Satyagraha* was abandoned, but popular feeling remained at the point of ignition.

9

TIME after time, in the weary course of the war, the Government had given guarantees of fair treatment towards Turkey and assurances of due consideration of Muslim susceptibilities in framing the peace settlement. The last one of these pledges was contained in a speech made by Mr Lloyd George on 5 January 1918 before the House of Commons in which the British Prime Minister repudiated all imperialistic ambition and declared that his Government would not pursue a vindictive policy and had no intention of depriving Turkey of the rich and predominantly Turkish land of Asia Minor and Thrace. He went on to say, 'While we do not challenge the maintenance of the Turkish empire, with its capital at Constantinople . . . Arabia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine are, in our judgement, entitled to a recognition of their separate national character . . .' It was not unfair to interpret this as a denial of Turkey's title to her extra-territorial possessions while maintaining the integrity of her homeland. The Prime Minister did not stop here. He defined in clear terms the consequences to British prestige if these undertakings were not honoured. 'There is nothing',

he said, 'which would damage British power in Asia more than the feeling that you could not trust the British word. That is the danger. It would be a fatal reputation for us . . . . .'[32] But there was a wide gap between the promise and the performance. While the Turks signed the armistice on 3 November 1918, the British marched into Mosul. Constantinople was occupied officially by the Allies, but actually by the British. On 15 May 1919, Greece, acting as the 'brutal nominee' of Britain, marched her forces into the Turkish homeland of Smyrna to liquidate what was left of Turkey. The advancing hordes disarmed the remnants of the Turkish army and committed unspeakable atrocities on the civil population. With powerful battalions arrayed against her Turkey seemed to be heading towards complete collapse. The intolerant utterances of Western statesmen, and the fiery articles appearing in influential newspapers were charged with the worst kind of religious fanaticism.[33] Lloyd George, a friend and admirer of the Greek Prime Minister, Venizelos was unabashedly anti-Turkish. Balfour, the author of the famous declaration of 1917, was bitterly prejudiced against the Turks for historical and racial reasons.[34] General Allenby, the conqueror of Palestine, was boosted as the victor of the last Crusade.[35] Elderly statesmen, otherwise known for sanity and moderation, spoke with great indiscretion when they chose to discuss Turkey. Every one of them seemed to be thirsting for revenge. Initiating a campaign of hate, they gave slogans such as, 'Turkey's acts merited the severest punishment', 'She was a fit case for the argument of bit stick', 'She should be reduced to the status of a fourth-rate power', and 'The *Khalifa* should be Vaticanized.'[36] It was clear that Turkey would be crushed under the weight of her victors' oppression. On the subject of Turkey, there was absolute unanimity among the Indian Muslims. They were united now as they had never been united before. Though separated from Turkey by thousands of miles and handicapped by their subjection to Britain, they were determined to fight Turkey's battles from India. Expulsion of the Turks from Europe after a sojourn of five hundred years meant an irreparable blow to the prestige of the Muslim world. The historiographer of the Government of India was forced to admit that there was 'a remarkable consolidation of Muslim opinion' in Turkey's favour. This was too feeble an expression for the explosive situation which prevailed in Muslim India. Sir Theodore Morison portrayed the state of the Muslim mind in a remarkable passage in one of his contributions to the Press:

> . . . In India itself the whole of the Muslim community from Peshawar to Arcot is seething with passion on this subject. Women inside the zenanas are weeping over it. Merchants who usually take no interest in public affairs are leaving their shops and counting houses to organize remonstrances and petitions, even the medieval theologians of Deoband and Nadwat-ul-ulema, whose detachment from the modern world is proverbial, are coming from their cloisters to protest against the destruction of Islam. For Muslims this one preoccupation has swallowed up all others, they can think and talk of nothing else. A few days ago a Muslim told me that he had, as an Indian, been keenly interested

in the reforms scheme, but he could not think about the reforms even on the day on which Mr Montagu moved the second reading in the House of Commons: the fate of Islam engrossed all his thoughts.[37]

On 17 October 1919, the Muslims observed the *Khilafat* day with the suspension of business, fasting, and prayers. The official Peace celebrations were fixed for the week beginning from 13 December. The leaders advised Muslim abstention from rejoicing while the fate of Turkey remained uncertain. An anti-peace celebrations committee set up to enforce this boycott met with considerable success and was able to enlist Hindu support. The entire Muslim political activity at this hour was centred round the Turkish and *Khilafat* question, Numerous political organizations, most of them mushroom growths sprang up in different regions of the sub-continent, two of which need to be mentioned especially. The first one was the All-India *Khilafat* Committee, led by Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, known as the Ali brothers, who had been recently discharged from prison, and the other was the Jamiat-ul-ulema. Both were animated by common ideals and stood for the preservation of the *Khilafat* and for an honourable peace treaty for the vanquished Turk. But the latter was exclusively a body of divines who had been drawn into the field of politics for the first time. The event was hailed as consummating the solidarity of the older and the 'new' elements in Muslim society. The Ali brothers went about the country denouncing Allied intentions towards Turkey in the strongest terms. They told their followers that though the War was over, peace was yet distant; Britain had shown scant regard for the sanctity of the holy places; they accused Muslim soldiers who had fought for Britain, and against Turkey, of breaking the holy law and earning eternal damnation. However, their principal plea was that the virtual British suzerainty over the Hejaz should be abolished and the custody of the holy places vested back in the *Khilafat*. The Government of India publicly and repeatedly expressed its sympathy with the Muslim demand but without effect. Official spokesmen were distrusted, for their declarations commanded no credence. In early 1920, a predominantly Muslim deputation waited on the Viceroy. In the course of a long talk, the deputationists explained that the *Khilafat* was an essentially religious institution, that it was integral to the Muslim faith, and that its extinction would not only be intolerable but catastrophic. They also reminded the head of the Government of the numerous promises made in the past and concluded by telling him, rather pointedly, that territorial gains or political advantages accruing to Britain from the disintegration of the Ottoman empire could hardly atone for the moral weakness of her position. The Viceroy was sympathetic. He replied that he had impressed the Muslim viewpoint on the British Government 'with a force that could not be surpassed' and that he would spare no effort in the future, but he pleaded helplessness, as the matter was an Allied rather than a British concern. All that he could do was to render all possible assistance to the Muslim deputation about to proceed to Britain to lay the case before the British Cabinet.[38] The more advanced section of Muslim politicians remained sceptical,

treating Chelmsford's reply as mere lip sympathy and refusing to be misled by 'words not backed by deeds.'[39]

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THE deputation to which the Viceroy referred had been named by the All-India *Khilafat* Committee. Led by Mohammad Ali, it included Sayyid Husain, Hasan Mohammad Hayat, and Sayyid Suleiman Nadavi as members. They were given an ardent send off at a public meeting in Bombay presided over by Tilak before setting out for England in February 1920. On board the ship, Mohammad Ali tried to pick up some spoken Arabic, and Suleiman Nadavi occupied himself with taking lessons in elementary English. The scholarly, energetic but short-tempered Sayyid Husain kept busy with his books. At Aden and Port Said they got in touch with local communities and acquainted them with the nature of their mission. Disembarking at Venice and learning that the Peace Conference was about to settle the fate of Turkey, they despatched urgent telegrams to the Prime Ministers of the Allied governments, politicians and prominent British journalists stating the Indian Muslim view on the *Khilafat*. They dashed to London, in spite of a railway strike in France. On their arrival in London, they made straight for the House of Commons, which was debating the future of Constantinople.[40] Seats had been reserved for them in the distinguished visitors' gallery. The debate was half-way through. The Prime Minister had already spoken. A handful of members expressed their sympathy for Turkey but the majority was vitriolic. Some members argued that Turks should be relieved of Constantinople since Turkish atrocities in Armenia[41] were organized in, and directed from that city. The deputation soon discovered the insurmountable difficulties of their assignment for prejudice against the Turk was strong. He was spoken of as a murderer of women and children and British public opinion demanded a decree of extirpation against him. Another powerful adversary was the church, and the Archbishop of Canterbury hoped to bolster up the prestige of the Anglican Church by siding with the Greeks and Armenians. A small band of Orientalists strained their resources of scholarship to build up the Allied argument. Professor Margoliouth cited history to show the weakness of the Ottoman claim to the *Khilafat* and pointed out that the connection between the two was fairly modern. An Italian Orientalist had written a widely broadcast article entitled 'Sultan as the Caliph', contending that the *Khilafat*, as an institution, was extinct since the fall of Baghdad. The same view was elaborated in a pamphlet *The Nature of Khilafat* published by the Italian ministry of foreign affairs. *The Times* tried to belittle the delegation itself and condemned its members as politically-minded men of 'doubtful antecedents' and the *Khilafat* agitation in India as a trumped-up affair. Mohammad Ali's 'disloyal' past formed the subject of quite a few parliamentary questions. The dismemberment of Turkey was foreshadowed in important public pronouncements coming from politicians and publicists. Thus, Mr Asquith tried to remove the impression that the

Khalifa had entered the war with limited liabilities, while Lord Robert Cecil pilloried Turkey for her utter incapacity for ruling subject races.

The Government of India had urged the restoration of Asia Minor and Thrace to Turkey, the maintenance of Turkish sovereignty over the holy places and the evacuation of the city of Constantinople. Curzon held this 'dictation' to be quite intolerable. He was at a loss to understand how Indian opinion was allowed to become a party to Peace negotiations, and to pose as the final court of Muslim appeal. Montagu, who had all along sympathised with the Indian Muslim feeling, issued a public rejoinder against his Cabinet colleagues justifying the Government of India's interference in Imperial policies where they threatened the internal peace of the sub-continent. By doing so, Montagu annoyed an important section of his own political friends.

Adroit, vigorous, and carefully planned propaganda was conducted on behalf of the Greeks and Armenians. It had extensive ramifications and was supported by inexhaustible financial resources. It was associated, though indirectly, with the authority of the League of Nations and the private views of the King. British and American missionaries, who had formerly worked in Asia Minor, circulated most of the atrocity stories which found their way into newspaper articles and books of fiction. A bulky book on the subject, compiled by Lord Bryce and the historian Toynbee, was issued by the British Government. A film, entitled the 'Auction of Soul', depicting Turkish cruelties, was being exhibited in various picture houses in London. Curiously enough, it had been shot in California. The story itself went into four editions within a few months. Every day, hundreds of telegrams were published in British newspapers containing horrifying details of a 'general massacre' in Armenia. Members of Parliament were flooded with angry messages. The deputation was shocked by the discovery that the Arabs residing in England did not only refuse to share their esteem for Turkey or their reverence for the *Khilafat*, but accused the Indian Muslims of an excessive interest in Thrace and Smyrna and a lack of consideration for Arab interests. Though the mission felt that it could achieve little, it persevered and organized several public meetings. It was difficult to persuade important persons to attend. Armenians came in bunches either to disturb or to convert these meetings into forums of counter-propaganda. They even tried to curry favour with the Arabs as co-victims of Turkish 'aggression'. In a British audience, the mere mention of Armenia was sufficient to repel every plea on behalf of the Turk. Even those who professed to have an open mind, deprecated the *Khliafat* as a 'narrow' issue. A discussion group of Labour members met the deputation in the party room in the House of Commons. The deputation had little success. George Bernard Shaw, who presided, bitterly complained of Muslim bigotry. The members, for one reason or another, delayed in calling on Ramsay MacDonald who was without a seat in Parliament at the time. The Labour leader felt insulted by being ignored and declined to help. British newspapers had so long and so vociferously espoused the Armenian cause that they could not be made to abandon their line even when their exag-

gerations were brought home to them. They gave bad publicity and resorted to inaccurate reporting. Whatever they published about the activities of the deputation was malignant and ungracious. Some of them even declined to insert well-paid advertisements. Only the *Daily Herald* and the *Foreign Affairs* showed some sympathy. £10,000 worth of shares of the former were purchased and a special issue on the *Khilafat* was published by the latter at the expense of the deputation. The two languishing Islamic information centres of London and Paris were revived, and their organs, the *Muslim Outlook* and *Echo d' Islam*, began to appear regularly. But their appeal was necessarily limited.

As Montagu was ill at the time, Mr Fisher met the group on behalf of the India Secretary on 2 March 1920. Mohammad Ali made out a full, clear and temperate case. He dwelt on the long association of the *Khilafat* with the glory of Islam, the haloed character of Constantinople and the inability of the Muslims exercising restraint at the break-up of the Ottoman empire. He disavowed anything in the nature of a threat, saying, 'tell me how to frame a warning that would be the most serious of warnings, but would not be construed into a threat.' Mr Fisher was apparently impressed. He mechanically reiterated, in familiar terms, British solicitude for the religious susceptibilities of the Indian Muslims but would not go beyond that. He only added that the British Government was not the only party concerned and that recent 'massacres' in Cilicia had created a painful impression. A member of the India Council, Mr Duke, who was present at the interview and who dabbled in theology, censured the 'idolatrous' interest of the deputation in Iraq. Mohammad Ali explained that visits to the tombs of saints were approved practically by all sects of Islam. When Mohmmad Ali made a request for an interview with the Prime Minister, Fisher replied that it could not be arranged before the final clause in the Peace Treaty with Turkey had been written. The deputation pointed out the futility of a hearing after the decision had been taken. They regretted that while the Greek Prime Minister had free access to Lloyd George at all times, the Indian Muslims were denied the opportunity of a single meeting.

The eagerly-sought-after interview with Lloyd George, which took place on 17 March, was joined by several British Orientalists. Mohammad Ali again acted as the spokesman. After he had spoken, Lloyd George read a prepared speech in reply which took no account of the points raised by the deputation. He said bluntly that all vanquished powers, Muslim or Christian, would be treated exactly alike. The rule would be applied blindly. No exception could be made in favour of Turkey. The Turks had fought against Britain and had been defeated. They must therefore be prepared to bear the logical consequence of this defeat. He justified Greek aggression in the name of self-determination. As Thrace was predominantly Greek, it should go back to Greece. Again as Smyrna's Muslim majority was racially Greek, Greece had every right to annex this as well. When Mohammad Ali wished to say something in reply, the Prime Minister interrupted, say-

ing that he did not wish either to sit through the whole night or to engage in further debate. Nevertheless, Mohammad Ali did assert that Christians constituted only a fraction of the population of every Turkish province including Armenia. The deputation objected to the British military occupation of Constantinople in the name of the Allies and requested permission to appear before the Peace Conference. But it was difficult to get the Prime Minister to commit himself, for his attempts were directed towards proving the delegation wrong. To the request for continued Turkish custody of the holy places, he replied, 'Would you want Arabs reconquered by the force of British arms, and replaced under the Caliph?' He repeated the charge of Armenian atrocities and questioned the Turks' ability to rule over non-Turkish peoples justly. When the interview ended, Sayyid Suleiman Nadavi tried to pass on to the Prime Minister a brochure reproducing the pronouncements of Muslim doctors of law on the importance of the institution of *Khilafat.* The latter thanked him with a smile but declined to receive it. An entirely misleading version of this interview was released from Downing Street. The statement of the delegation was cleverly edited to sound ridiculous, while the Prime Minister's arguments were made to appear invincible.

In spite of this failure, the deputation stayed on and did whatever it could to educate those sections of the European public which it could reach. The members toured Britain, France and Italy, meeting politicians, academicians and journalists. Mohammad Ali addressed many gatherings including the annual Labour Conference. In Geneva they attended an international Socialist rally. They found the political atmosphere more favourable on the Continent. The French Socialists were less impervious to argument than their British comrades. But the French Prime Minister, M. Milleraund, re-echoed the Lloyd Georgian phraseology. While he disclaimed malice towards Islam and the Muslims, he asked the deputationists to subordinate their sentiments to reason. Throughout the talk, he showed visible signs of impatience and ended with the observation, 'If you want to know more about Turks, go to Armenia.' The Prime Minister of Italy was more responsive. He promised that his country would give no ground for complaint to the Muslim world. The Pope showed even greater consideration. He made a few observations to the effect that Catholicism stood for peace and conciliation with Islam and that the present conflict was not a conflict between Islam and Christianity, but essentially one between religion and irreligion. He further said that reports from their representatives were that the Ottoman empire had been very tolerant and neutral in religious matters. An unjust peace might very well bring about another war, in which case the responsibility would lie squarely on the authors of the Peace treaty and not on the Muslims.

A study of the deputationists' utterances[41] shows that they based their case on the imperative necessity of the maintenance of the *Khilafat* and the need for a proper custody of the holy places. The *Khilafat*, they argued, was not part of the faith. It was the whole of the faith and an 'absolutely unalterable' doctrine of Islam. The functions of the

Khalifa are not merely devotional, but as the head of the federal republic of Islam he was the enforcer of Divine Law. It was a misfortune that the identification of this office with the Turkish monarchy, confused the issue of Turkey with that of Islam. The Muslims did not recognize geographical or national barriers and the *Khilafat*, unlike the Papacy could not remain secure in the enjoyment of its spiritual authority after being shorn of its temporal adjuncts. The Balkan wars had already reduced the *Khalifa's* power to the minimum consistent with his dignity. Further deprivations would weaken it to the point of extinction. Therefore Turkey must not be treated as harshly as Austria and Germany, but should be allowed to retain her pre-war possessions. Arabia is a consecrated land and the *Jazirat-ul-Arab* (the island of Arabia—Arabia was always spoken of as an island in Muslim usage) as defined and delimited by Muslim geographers, had to be kept clear of non-Muslims according to the dying injunction of the Prophet. The holy places of Islam must remain in the *Khalifa's* keeping. But these places had been attacked in the war and were, in one way or another, under British occupation. As Islam does not countenance non-Muslim mandates, the framers of the Turkish peace treaty must take cognizance of the Muslim law. Autonomy could be granted to non-Turkish communities living within the Ottoman empire and it was quite practicable to satisfy Arab ambitions within the scheme of Turkish sovereignty. The British Government had repeatedly guaranteed the religious freedom of its subjects. Since the maintenance of the Ottoman empire was an article of faith with Muslims, the British Government could not in all fairness be a party to its dismemberment. Evidently Muslim loyalty was being put to a severe test. But these pleas failed in their effect. The deputation came back empty-handed in November 1920. The earlier plan of a more extensive itinerary covering America, Asia Minor and other parts of the *Khalifa's* empire was given up. By the time he returned, Mohammad Ali had persuaded himself that 'the freedom of India was absolutely necessary for the freedom of Islam'. The only way the Muslims could rectify this wrong was by joining with the Hindus to work for the emancipation of India. This idea was promptly seized and sloganized. It is evident that the Muslim concept of Indian freedom was a means to an end and not an end in itself.

While they were still in Britain, Mohammad Ali and his associates were cautioned by friends to avoid all mention of religion. But Mohammad Ali did not fall in with this advice. He felt that he was essentially on a religious mission and that religion was his *locus standi* for the advocacy of the *Khilafat* cause.[42] But the inner logic of the case was different from its external appearance. Despite its deep religious colouring, critics rightly refused to invest the *Khilafat* cause with religious significance. As an institution the *Khilafat* had had a chequered past. It had originally migrated from Medina to Damascus and from Damascus to Baghdad. For some time, it was located in Egypt and then it fell to the lot of Turkey very much as a prize. Some of its doctrinal puzzles are difficult to resolve. It was over-sanctified and its authority was magnified by its Indian exponents. As a matter of fact,

the authority of the most powerful of the *Khalifas* ended at the boundaries of his dominions. It is true that occasionally Muslim rulers of far away lands found it convenient to pay homage to the reigning *Khalifa* and receive his blessings in return. But this formality could not be construed to extend the *Khalifa's* territories or jurisdiction. It is, therefore, fair to conclude that the Indian movement for the preservation of the *Khilafat* was only a bid to arrest the political decline of Islam. This view is supported by the fact that the most prominent Muslim champions of the Turkish cause in Britain, like the Aga Khan, Ameer Ali, Yusuf Ali and Isphahani, all belonged to the Shia sect, which does not subscribe to the Sunni concept of *Khilafat*. Ameer Ali, in particular, wrote letters to the Press so severely critical of Allied policy as to call forth repeated protests in the columns of *The Times* on the ground that it did not become a member of the Judicial Committee to stimulate unrest among Muslims within the Empire. Be that as it may, the more moderate demand put before British public by the Aga Khan and Ameer Ali was that the Turkish sovereign, as the *Khalifa* of the vast Sunni communion, should be kept in absolute possession of Constantinople, Thrace, and Asia Minor, a region predominantly inhabited by the Turkish race. A few solitary voices in Britain tried to make their countrymen see the implications of the disruption of the Ottoman empire. They were quick to grasp the fact that the break-up of the Ottoman dominions boded ill for the future political stability of vast and backward areas. They could discern no sense in the 'Balkanization' of the Middle East and warned against its dangers. They suggested the less heroic course of leaving the Turk to carry the woes and worries of the predominantly Muslim areas. Sir Theodore Morison wrote: 'Those who would parcel out among the Allies countries which are fundamentally Mohammedan, are creating the very conditions which mean chronic unrest.'[43] An anonymous contributor to the *Nineteenth Century* writing in 1920 was able to see that 'Blindly the French and the English (have) made matters immeasurably more complicated. Opposition to Christian intruders (has) already begun to lead to embittered strife.' But obviously sanity was under Cassandra's curse. The bungling statesmanship at Sevres was making the world unsafe for peace.

11

WHILE the sterile *Khilafat* mission was uselessly busy in Britain, the Muslim community in India watched its activities with close and anxious interest. The drastic character of the Peace treaty with Turkey was more or less accurately forecast in the daily messages cabled to India, every cable causing resentment and despair. Much of the provocation for what followed was provided by a cynical breach of rashly generous promises. The Government was thoroughly discredited and the initiative now rested with the agitators. Shaukat Ali took the offensive. He issued an appeal for the observance of 19 March, as the day of mourning. His manifesto threatened the severance of 'loyal connection with the throne' if Muslim demands were not met. The

Government hastened to repudiate the doctrine of contingent loyalty.[44]

The peacemakers of 1919 approached the Turkish question in their characteristic casual and off-hand fashion. Montagu felt perturbed at the way in which they were tackling their job. The Indian peer, Lord Sinha, who had been nominated to the Peace Conference, was not briefed either by his own or by the British Government on this point. The Conference was out of bounds for the representatives of the Indian *Khilafat* movement. Lloyd George, one of the dominant figures of the Conference, was bent upon reviving the traditional Liberal vendetta against Turkey. President Wilson, who had exhausted his ebullient radicalism in sweeping advocacies of big causes, had no taste for such irksome detail. He knew very little about the Turkish problem and was disinclined to annoy his more subtle and determined colleagues.[45] So that Turkey was friendless and isolated and the deliberations of the Conference led to some fantastic results, not at the expense of Germany, but at the cost of Austria and Turkey. The terms were unjust and harsh to the limit. The Turks had been already disarmed and could offer no resistance. The Sultan was a prisoner of the victors. A puppet government was installed at Constantinople. The independent members of the Turkish parliament were deported to Malta one after another. The statement of Allied terms was presented to the eighty-year-old Teufiq Pasha. The helpless Turkish delegates had no choice except to affix their signatures which they did on 11 August.

The Treaty broke up the Ottoman Empire and reduced the Sultan to the status of a vassal prince. The whole of European Turkey along with Smyrna was gifted to Greece. The city of Constantinople was left with the Turks but the Dardanelles was to be fortified by the Allies. Iraq and Syria passed under mandates. The holy places of Islam were to be virtually protected by Britain. Turkey could not maintain an army, navy or air force and was ordered to close down her military schools. All wireless installations on Turkish soil were removed. Turkey's financial and economic affairs were placed under Allied surveillance. For all practical purposes, Turkey was wiped out of existence, in so far as nations can be wiped out by international collusion. The Indian Muslims staggered under the blow. Even the Viceroy had to make a public admission that the 'treaty included terms which must be painful to Muslims'. But no one in Britain took notice of remonstrances from India. Even Montagu, who had advocated a lenient deal with Turkey, decided to treat the matter as closed. But soon the Allies were to be shocked into the realization that the vicious treaty could not be imposed upon Turkey. A new factor had entered into the situation. This was the Kemalist government at Ankara.

By this time, it seemed as if the *Khilafat* leaders had gained complete control over Gandhi who lived in close association with them and lent his support and sympathy unreservedly. The great Hindu leader declared that the future of the *Khilafat* was a 'matter of life and death' for the Muslims and advised them against meek submission. While violence was ruled out, passive resistance had only led into a blind alley. The new campaign required a new strategy and a different procedure. A new weapon was to be tried. This was 'non-cooperation' which meant

that all holders of 'offices or emoluments' under the Government should resign their jobs, voluntarily. No one was to be coerced 'for voluntary withdrawal alone is a test of popular feeling.' The non-co-operation programme was to be completed in several well-defined stages. Every step was to be taken after scrupulous deliberation to 'ensure the retention of self-control under the fiercest heat.' The beginning was to be made 'at the top as also the bottom.' On 22 June, Gandhi wrote his famous letter to the Viceroy protesting against the severity of the sentence passed against Turkey and urging him to resign his office for his failure to obtain justice. Two days later ninety prominent Sunni Muslims signed a joint communication informing the Government that the least they could do was to withhold assistance from those who had reduced the *Khilafat* to impotence. Almost simultaneously, a *fatwa* was published under the authority of five hundred Muslim doctors of theology forbidding their followers from co-operating with the authorities in any form, and exhorting them to be prepared for 'supreme sacrifice', the only mark of a true Muslim.

12

WHILE the *Khilafat* movement was the one running sore of British dominion in India, the unredressed Amritsar wrong was the other. For some time impassioned and vehement Muslim opinion contrasted sharply with Hindu reluctance to precipitate a crisis. The 1919 annual session of the Congress was held at Amritsar under the shadow of the Jalianwala Bagh tragedy. Opinion was divided over the coming reform, which was the main subject of discussions. A large irreconcilable group insisted on repeating the boycott resolution of the previous year. Gandhi, thinking of a long-term strategy, advised moderation. His faith in Britain was unimpaired. Under his influence Montagu received a vote of thanks and at his instance the Congress decided to work the new constitution for whatever it was worth, accepting it as a stepping stone towards a larger measure of autonomy. The next resolution was aimed at Chelmsford. He was held responsible for these misdeeds and his recall was demanded. Jawaharlal Nehru has recorded that for many months Gandhi felt satisfied and lived and acted in the hope that the *Khilafat* wrong would be undone and the wounds of the Punjab would be healed by compensating the dependants of the Jalianwala victims. However, as nothing happened he became anxious and then suspicious and began to look upon the reforms as a snare.

In many ways the year 1920 proved to be a year of frustration for India. It was then that the Turkish peace was made. A veritable commotion was also caused by the public hearings of an official committee (called the Hunter Committee after the name of its Scottish chairman) investigating into the administration of the Martial Law in the Punjab, in which Martial Law administrators, with a strange show of self-applause and arrogance, boldly admitted and callously justified their unspeakable conduct. Towards the end of March, the Congress report on Amritsar was released, bringing to light fuller de-

tails of the gruesome story. This report blamed Sir Michael O'Dwyer and his provocative methods for the tragedy. It condemned Martial Law as unnecessary and characterized General Dyer's action 'as a calculated piece of inhumanity unparalleled for its ferocity in the history of modern British administration'. It stigmatized several Martial Law orders as unworthy of a civilized government, endorsing the Congress demand for the dismissal of guilty officials. The feeling was further embittered by the publication of the Hunter findings. The Indians and the British members of the Committee, unable to agree among themselves, produced two reports instead of one. The British members justified the promulgation of Martial Law, took a complaisant view of the O'Dwyer administration and were otherwise guarded in the condemnation of the military rule. The Indian members spoke more courageously and set down their conclusions in stronger terms. But on the whole the cold and, at times, colourless language of the reports, the inadequate punishments recommended for the guilty officials and the most tepid and perfunctory conclusions adopted by the Government thereupon, were viewed merely as white-wash. Dyer was relieved of his command and deprived of his pension on the advice of the Committee. Responsible quarters in England exhibited a tendency to build him up into a hero. A section of the British Press applauded him as the saviour of the British Empire in India. The *Morning Post* started a fund to compensate him for the loss of his pension, to which Lord Carson and Sir Michael O'Dwyer were the first contributors. The subscriptions brought in £3,000 from different parts of the Empire. The vote of the House of Lords in restoring Dyer's pension in opposition to the Government decision further outraged Indian sentiment and kept alight the flames of racial hatred.

By the summer of 1920, both the Hindus and the Muslims were deeply moved, though for entirely different reasons. They found themselves as bed-fellows in adversity. Gandhi acted swiftly. In his own words he seized upon the 'moment of moments' and called upon the Hindus to help the Muslims to the utmost for such an opportunity of uniting the two communities 'would not arise in a hundred years'. He regarded himself as a 'humble instrument' for the unification of the Indian people. The Muslims readily accepted the assistance preffered by Gandhi. Some Hindu leaders were openly critical of what they called the unwisdom of mixing up the *Khilafat* issue with that of national freedom. With their unrivalled hold over Indian Muslims, the Ali brothers were wholeheartedly behind Gandhi. Like him, they professed unlimited faith in 'non-violent non-cooperation'. The popular mind, thoroughly aroused and prepared for action, needed only the formal authority from Congress and the *Khilafat* (the League was not as important) organizations.

The Congress met in special session at Calcutta in September 1920. Some top-ranking Congressmen suspected the new-fangled dogmas, fearing all forms of unconstitutional action. But the prevailing temper soon broke their resistance. Tilak, who might have fought against the current, had just died. Gandhi's authority was unchallangeable, and his programme was rubber-stamped. At the same time, some important

changes were made in the Congress constitution. The goal of 'self-government within the Empire' was substituted by that of *Swaraj* (an elastic Hindi term which could bear many interpretations.[46] 'Constitutional methods of action' gave place to 'peaceful and legitimate means'. These and other provisions transformed the Congress into a mass organization. A Tilak *Swaraj* fund was inaugurated to finance the new responsibilities of the Congress. A sub-committee drew up a detailed programme for the boycott of law-courts by advising the lawyers to give up legal practice, and the people to settle their disputes outside law courts, the boycott of state-maintained or state-sided educational institutions for their 'imported and unmanly education,' and replacing them with 'national' schools to impart an education suited to the genius of the people and designed to help the attainment of national ideals; and the boycott of legislatures by asking people not to contest elections or exercise the right of vote. This line was approved by the Congress, as also by the *Khilafat* Committee, in a subsequent session at Nagpur in the month of December. Some Congressmen who again reasoned about the futility of the new method were overruled. Surat was repeated in reverse. While in 1907 Extremists were expelled from the Congress, Moderates had to accept exclusion in 1920. The extremists were left in control of the Congress.

The struggle had begun and a united and angry India had revolted. It is well, therefore, to be clear once again about the foundations of the formidable Hindu-Muslim entente which nearly brought the British rule in India to the verge of collapse. S.C. Bose, who was in the thick of the battle tells us:

> So an alliance was at once struck between Mr Gandhi and the Ali brothers on the basis of two issues, viz., the Punjab atrocities and the *Khilafat* grievance. The Ali brothers and their followers while keeping up a separate organization—the All-India *Khilafat* Committee—would join the Indian National Congress and agitate for the redress of the Punjab and *Khilafat* wrongs and for the attainment of political freedom, which was the only guarantee against such wrongs in future. On the other hand, the Indian National Congress would lend its full support to the *Khilafat* organization in the country and agitate for the redress of the *Khilafat* and Turkish grievances.[47]

Jawaharlal Nehru, who was on the threshhold of a great and strenuous political career later spoke of it as follows:

> . . . this nationalism was itself a composite force and behind it could be distinguished a Hindu nationalism, a Muslim nationalism partly looking beyond the frontiers of India, and, what was more in consonance with the spirit of the times, an Indian nationalism. For the time being they overlapped and all pulled together.[48]

That Muslims did not succumb to this nationalism without serious reservations should be clear from their attitude as perceived by Nehru:

There were long talks with the maulavis and the ulemas, and non-violence and non-cooperation were discussed, especially non-violence. Gandhiji told them that he was theirs to command, but on the definite understanding that they accepted non-violence with all its implications. There was to be no weakening over that, no temporizing, no mental reservations. It was not easy for the maulavis to grasp this idea but they agreed, making it clear that they do as a policy only and not as a creed for their religion did not prohibit the use of violence in a righteous cause.[49]

The principal leader of the combined operation on the Muslim side, Mohammad Ali, was equally emphatic that this unity was based on a recognition of, and the respect for, the existing differences between the two peoples. He aimed at an Indian concordat like that of Canada. He says:

> I had long been convinced that here in this country of hundreds of millions of human beings, intensely attached to religion, and yet infinitely split up into communities, sects and denominations, Providence had created for us the mission of solving a unique problem and working out a new synthesis. It was nothing less than a federation of faiths. The lines of cleavage were too deeply marked to permit a unity other than federal, and yet the cleavage was not territorial or racial in character but religious, and I had been dreaming for some time of a United faiths of India . . . .[50]

These ideas occur and recur in Mohammad Ali's writings. His allegiance was given primarily to religion, and only secondarily to the political movement. It was a solemn religious obligation, he often said, that took him to England in 1920 and not a political mission. When at the end of 1921 he was prosecuted for 'seducing' the Muslim soldiery in the King's Indian Army, he defended himself, in a long address to the jury, on the ground that Man's first duty was to God, that God came before the King and the country, that the Law of God was above man-made law and that the law of the country was only worthy of respect if it did not conflict with Divine Law; if it did no one was bound by it.[51]

Gandhi was equally clear about his primary loyalties. Confessing that every fibre of his being was Hindu, he wrote:

> . . . . . for me there are not politics but religion. They subserve religion. The politician in me has never dominated a single decision of mine, and if I take part in politics, it is only because politics encircle us today like the coil of a snake, from which one cannot go out, no matter how much one tries. In order to wrestle with the snake, I have been experimenting with myself and my friends in politics by introducing religion into politics.[52]

And again:

> I call myself a Sanatani (orthodox) Hindu because, firstly I believe in the Vedas . . . . . and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures

. . . . . Secondly, I believe in . . . . . the caste system . . . . . Thirdly, I believe in the protection of cow as an article of faith, and fourthly, I do not disbelieve in idol worship.[53]

The Indian Muslims who gathered under the banner of the political movement were not seeking a political or psychic fusion with Hindu nationalism. They were captivated not so much by the vision of an independent India, as by the prospect of a sturdier Muslim world emerging out of the chaos left by the World War. Their usual pan-Islamism, a competent American critic, Werner Levi, has pointed out, was now tinged with nationalism. The downfall of Tsardom had plunged Central Asia into confusion out of which new states appeared to be rising in a rudimentary form. This promised a new revival of independent Muslim communities in Central Asia that might have matured into a solid block of Islamic states and transformed the balance of power in the region. Hakim Ajmal Khan, one of the leaders of the *Khilafat* movement, was evidently playing with this idea when he told the *Khilafat* Conference of 1921: 'Asia Minor on one side and India on the other were but two extreme links in the chain of a future Islamic federation'. Clearly religion was at the back of his mind, though superficially he appeared to be appealing to the ideas of Asian nationalism and solidarity.

13

GANDHI and the Ali brothers met with phenomenal success during their whirlwind tours of the country, preaching non-cooperation. The courts of law became practically empty. People carried their disputes to arbitration boards which sprang up throughout the country, while judges and magistrates sat idle. The Government revenues from litigation dropped seriously. Lawyers threw away their legal practice and along with it their means of livelihood. Political workers did not recognize the jurisdiction of the courts. When brought there, they offered no evidence and put up no defence. A vigorous temperance movement struck at Government receipts from excise. Gandhi gave a new turn to the movement by prescribing the use of the spinning wheel in every home. 'Spin your own thread, weave your own cloth. That is the way to *Swaraj*', was the unceasing theme of his orations. He himself initiated hundreds of men and women into the art of spinning. Indigenous coarse cloth became the uniform of political leaders and their followers. The boycott of foreign cloth was pursued with a vigour reminiscent of *Swadeshi* days. There was scarcely a college or a university from which students did not walk out. A powerful offensive was directed against the legislatures recently established under the Montagu scheme. Elections were nearly wrecked, voters and candidates being intimidated everywhere. Meetings were broken up. Only about a quarter of the registered voters turned up to record their votes. In half a dozen constituencies, no election was possible owing to the absence of a candidate. The constitutional experiment could not have begun at a more unpromising juncture.

Gandhi denounced the Government as 'satanic'. He sermonized that India's salvation lay in unlearning all that she had learnt from the British. Lawyers and doctors were of no earthly use. The so-called upper classes had to learn to live 'conscientiously and religiously, and deliberately the simple peasant life, knowing it to be a life giving true happiness'. The effective propaganda led to a great simplicity in living, dress and manners.

The merger of the social service organization of the Congress with the uniformed *Khilafat* volunteer corps, raised in June 1921, was called—the 'national volunteers'. Financially subsidized, they carried their activities to rural areas and enforced the behests of local leaders. The picketing of liquor shops created ugly scenes and every arrest led to mob violence. Opponents of the boycott were socially ostracized. Even their dead bodies were not allowed to be buried in community graveyards. It was against this background of political chaos and riots that the Prince of Wales, who carried a message of goodwill from King George V, landed in Bombay on 17 November, 1921. Gandhi could do little except deplore the spirit of revolt, while the country was lapsing into anarchy. He refused to talk to the Viceroy except on his own terms. But when most of his political associates had been sent to prison, he called off non-cooperation abruptly and unexpectedly because a band of national volunteers attacked a police station in a village called Chorachori in the United Provinces, setting fire to the building and roasting alive all the constables on duty. The end of non-cooperation also brought about the end of the *Khilafat* movement as well as that of the Hindu-Muslim alliance. The old pattern of inter-communal relations re-established itself.

A tragic offshoot of the *Khilafat* was the *Hijrat* (migration) movement. Mohammad Ali explained it in a letter to the Viceroy which ran as follows:

When a land is not safe for Islam a Muslim has only two alternatives, *Jehad* or *Hijrat*. That is to say, he must either make use of every force God has given him for the liberation of the land and the ensurement of perfect freedom for the practice and preaching of Islam, or he must migrate to some other and freer land with a view to return to it when it is once more safe for Islam . . . . .

In view of our present weak condition, migration is the only alternative for us . . . . . Millions of ties . . . . . formed in our twelve-century long sojourn in India would seek to keep us tied down to it . . . . . But a greater call would make us leave this dear land of ours . . . . . We shall be leaving it only in order to work for its liberation from lawless laws, and the restoration of all its rights and privileges as the land of the free . . . . . We shall not be accused of want of patriotism or of desertion in the hour of its peril. Our mosques and the bones of our ancestors we shall entrust to the loving and reverential care of our non-Muslim countrymen, and God in his beneficence and infinite Mercy has not left us in these wonderful days without many convincing proofs that this sacred trust will be in safe and deserving hands. This step . . . . . will

perhaps be the most decisive in the history of our community . . . . .[54]

Hijrat Committees, which were formed in all cities, persuaded Muslims to sell all their worldly possessions and emigrate to Afghanistan, the nearest country of Muslim rule.

In obedience to this call many thousands of simple Muslims joined the *Hijrat* (flight) movement, and took part in a sort of exodus from India. In North West Frontier Province and Sind hundreds of families sold their land and property for a mere song, settled up their worldly affairs, placed their wives and children in carts, surrendered the Government rifles entrusted to them for protection against marauders, and departed in the direction of the Khyber Pass. It was caclulated that in the one month of August, 1920, as many as 18,000 people moved in the direction of Afghanistan. So long as they were not interfered with, the emigrants were perfectly peaceful and orderly, on the best of terms with the local officials and displaying neither malice nor resentment against any man. In the depth of its religious sincerity, the *Hijrat* movement of 1920 resembled the Crusades of Europe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the inividual suffering that was endured for either cause was very great. Afghanistan is poor country quite unable to absorb so large an influx of population. Eventually the Afghan authorities on the border were compelled to turn the *muhajarin* (emigrants) back. As a result the tide of emigration ebbed slowly and fell back to its former home, but the road from Peshawar to Kabul was strewn with graves of old men, women and children who had succumbed to the hardships of the journey. When the unhappy *muhajarin* returned, they found themselves homeless and penniless, their property which they had sold for a tithe of its value was in the hands of others.[55]

14

THE *Khilafat* movement arose out of circumstances that had nothing to do with India. It will go down into history as a disinterested and altruistic movement animated by solicitude for another people. Of its critics there has been no dearth. The passions that it stirred appear to be unreal at this distance of time. However, it has a credit as well as a debit side. To conclude the narrative we shall now turn to some of its less known aspects.

The All-India *Khilafat* Committee had focused the whole of its attention on Turkey and the *Khilafat* ever since its inception in 1919. It joined hands with the Congress on the assumption that the achievement of Indian independence would prove to be a tower of strength for the world of Islam. But the goal was yet distant. With the Treaty of Lausanne and the abolition of the *Khilafat* by the Turkish national assembly sitting at Ankara, the *raison detre* of the *Khilafat* Committee was removed. But the *Khilafat* issue had weighed on the Muslim mind too long and too heavily to be abandoned lightly. This decision upset

the *Khilafat* leaders who dismissed the news as a fabrication in the first instance. On second thoughts they despatched a cable to Mustapha Kemal Pasha soliciting contradiction. But the message brought no reply. After the lapse of about a month, they made a pathetic appeal to him to spare the institution and ensure its perpetuation on a 'true democratic basis'. In the communication, they brought out the importance and advantages of Turkey's association with the *Khilafat* adding that she was the only state capable of presenting a *Khalifa* to the Islamic world. But the Turk refused to listen. Upon this Shaukat Ali approached the Government for passports for a delegation to Turkey to confer with Turkish leaders to 'remove their misunderstanding'. The Government of India agreed on the condition that the personnel of the delegation as well as its programme would have to receive prior approval of the country or countries proposed to be visited. It was doubtful if the Turks would agree to receive the delegation or pay heed to its version of the holy law. The terminus of their efforts was reached and the *Khilafatists* were compelled to seek other avenues of activity. They still worked for the restoration of the *Khilafat* but found it necessary to give increasing attention to domestic politics. Nothing is more fatal to an organization than the failure to achieve its first object. The movement collapsed on account of the inherent limitations and deficiencies of its leadership faced with circumstances it could neither control nor canalize. That is why the *Khilafat* Committee emerged out of the ordeal more dead than alive. Though the formal organization remained, with its office, journal and a distinguished pair of leaders, its vitality had been drained away. Its new projects were no more than scraps of paper. Prominent members deserted and growing dissensions within hastened its downfall. Confusion in the acount of its campaign funds impaired its credit. The generality of Muslims had contributed to the *Khilafat* chest to the point of suffering. In the heat of the moment men had sold their belongings and women their jewellary. When all these efforts appeared abortive, the inevitable reaction set in. Many began to doubt the genuineness of the purposes for which enormous sums of money had been thrown away. Charges of embezzlement were flung back and forth. The men at the top experienced considerable difficulty in clearing themselves of these accusations. Popular suspicions were confirmed by the Chhotani affair in which the treasurer of the organization, a business magnate of repute, was found to have diverted *Khilafat* moneys to the promotion of his private business. His own bankruptey led to the financial ruin of the *Khilafat*.

The *Khilafat* movement carried political awakening to large masses of Muslims. Its hostility to the British rule was far more uncompromising than that of the Congress. Their temporary confluence infused a new life into India's freedom movement. To the Muslim community it gave a new type of leader who no longer operated from behind the scenes but stood in the limelight and rubbed shoulders with the common people. Politics ceased to be a subject of drawing-room discussions. It was during the *Khilafat* days that representatives of Indian Muslims came into contact with eminent personages from other Muslim coun-

tries. The meeting of minds was far from fruitful. The Indian Muslims could not appreciate the realities of Turco-Arab relations and the talks with Arab leaders seldom ended happily. The Indian Muslims' reluctance to accept the internal rivalries of the Muslim world persisted long after the *Khilafat* movement was dead. The real significance of the *Khilafat* movement lies in the fact of its being a desparete bid to save the semblance of unity in the world of Islam. The late Aga Khan has brought this out in his Memoirs:

Our instinctive Muslim faith in the idea of the continuance of Turkey as a great power had wisdom in it, for it would have achieved practical results, the security and stability of the Middle East, far transcending anything that the makeshift, haphazard policy of the years since the end of the Second World War—piecemeal withdrawal of political suzerainty by Britain, piecemeal financial, economic, and military aid by the United States have been able to effect. Consider the disruption and the political *malaise* which have been the lot of the Middle East; consider . . . . how honourably all this might have been avoided.[56]

The *Khilafat* movement introduced the concept of 'national educations into Muslim politics just as the agitation over the partition of Bengal had brought it into Hindu politics. In October 1920, the Ali brothers made an assault on Aligarh, under Gandhi's leadership. They hurled an ultimatum at the trustees of the College to hand over the institution to boycotters and non-co-operators. When the demand was politely refused the disappointed leaders opened a regular battlefront to obtain possession of the College with all its assets or to wreck it. The management of the College mobilized its resources to meet the challenge. Both parties argued and intrigued. The struggle was a protracted one. Mohammad Ali lost the contest but succeeded in winning over some distinguished students. A rival institution, the *Jamia-i-Milli* (or the National Muslim University) was set up in the very precincts of the College. A few dwellings were rented to house it. But accommodation was insufficient. Classes were held under the shade of trees. The curriculum vastly exaggerated the importance of religious instruction. Teaching hours were not fixed. Classes began early in the morning and continued till late in the night with only food and prayer breaks. But all the time the infant school was rocked by the political earthquake. Studies were interrupted to allow students to spend days and weeks in political activities. The institution could make little headway till it lost the memory of its origin, wound up its affairs and sought a new home in Delhi. In the new surroundings it developed a character and personality of its own. The *Jamia-i-Milli* which is the only remnant of Muslim experiment in national education steers clear of numerous foibles of the current educational system.

In the *Khilafat* crisis the leadership of the Muslim community was grasped by the *ulema* and their allies. Before 1918 the divines considered politics outside their domain and were generally indifferent to all that happened in the country. In some respects, the new orientation was

unfortunate. As a class the divines were sadly behind the times. They were ill-educated and ill-equipped for the business of politics. Their mutual bickerings were well known and their angularities proverbial. With a sizeable section of them religion did not necessarily come into politics as an idealistic or constructive force. Sometimes its influence bordered on the vulgar. Quite a few zealots among them ransacked the whole of Muslim law and tradition and disinterred some texts which could be stretched to justify the use of Gandhian techniques of non-cooperation and passive resistance for political ends. By some ingenuity they read into the Meccan life of the Prophet a titanic example of *Satyagraha*. But their grotesque attempts to effect a cohesion between Islam and Hinduism led them to make oblations to the sacred Ganges in the orthodox Hindu fashion. They discovered in the Krishna of Hindu mythology the Moses of the Christians and Muslims and identified Gandhi with the promised one in Islam called the *Mehdi*. They snatched at a hundred and one straws to establish the essential oneness of the two faiths.

The concord between the divines and the Congress proved lasting. The *ulema* had arrived in the field of politics to stay and did not retire even when the ashes of the *Khilafat* movement had cooled down. Thus, they became the nucleus of various 'nationalist' Muslim organizations which basked in the Congress sunshine in the thirties and early forties. On the one hand, they stood for a resurgent Islam and on the other they owed allegiance to the Congress whose ideals were, in almost every respect, antithetical to theirs. It was usual for them to argue at length by employing theological casuistry and the cliches of social sciences picked up in the course of their association with the better-educated Congressmen. In Muslim society where the masses were particularly susceptible to appeals made in the name of religion, their influence was bound to be adverse. The Congressmen who were otherwise vociferous about the secularization of politics were ever ready to exploit this reserve of influence to reinforce their political propaganda among Muslims. The lines of cleavage between Hindus and Muslims were occasionally blurred by the activities of nationalist Muslims. The Congress treated them as assets because they gave a colour of plausibility to its representative claims.

The *Khilafat* movement also brought into play the anti-Western bias latent in Muslim society. The West and Westernism became terms of opprobrium. A typical literary expression of this dislike of the West is to be found in the published diary of the secretary of a Government sponsored *Khilafat* delegation summoned to England in 1923.[57] The writer was repelled by everything that met his eyes in the West. The very atmosphere of London choked him and he felt suffocated by its 'eternal' and 'cold' darkness. Britain, he said, had nothing to offer to a person with a dark skin. He found Westminister Abbey a dull place and felt positively disinclined to see the British Parliament at work. Business took him to the India Office several times and to Downing Street twice. He studied life in the Hyde Park, Piccadilly Circus and Oxford Street after sunset and concluded that it summed up the Western mode of life. He did not visit any other site of interest in the

huge city. He also recorded vivid impressions of a few important figures in British public life. Montagu struck him as a very magnetic and dexterous politician, an incurable optimist with an unfailing smile on his lips. He described him as an engaging conversationalist, who had a knack of reaching other people's hearts with profuse and effortless expressions of sympathy. But his elegant manner was just a mask. His geniality could not deceive those who received it. His courtesy was the courtesy of well-bred pauper whose 'good temper is the indication of an empty pocket.'

The diarist describes the seventy-year-old Prime Minister, Lloyd George, as stout and pink in the face with unusually bright and piercing eyes. His upper lip was concealed under a thick moustache and his hair was combed backwards in the familiar Indian style. He found him evasive, cryptic and laconic in speech and as uncertain in manner as the London weather. He complained that he only talked about things that he wanted to talk about, only keeping up an appearance of discussion. He referred often to notes and was rescued by the secretary where he failed or faltered. Though at times flashy and brilliant he looked like a man with a bad liver. The two interviews with the Prime Minister were so meaningless that the members of the delegation doubted the utility of a long voyage from India to Britain

While it is true that the ultimate Turkish victory over the Greeks was won under the leadership of the Government of Ankara, the *Khilafat* movement prevented Britain from giving open assistance to the Greeks, which Mr Lloyd George and his colleagues favoured. Another important consequence of this movement was the hardening of British opinion against Muslim India. British radicals and left-wingers had always shunned the Muslims as reactionaries. Appeals for the conservation of the *Khilafat* and the defence of the temporal power of Islam were addressed to inimical ears, The British public had been worked up to demand exemplary punishment for the fallen foe and was outraged at the effusive expressions of fraternization with Turks. Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan, a prominent historian and Muslim leader in the twenties, has told us that when he went to Britain in 1927 to explain the case of the Indian Muslim minority to the leaders of British opinion, he found that the offence caused by the *Khilafat* agitation was still unforgotten and unforgiven.

V

POLITICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

Strife renewed—The Moplah 'rebellion'—Personalities and politics—A turning point—Muslim demands—The Nehru Report—The Round Table Conferences

THE twenties represent a period of transition, conflict, and civil strife in the Indian sub-continent. The Hindu-Muslim unity of the *Khilafat* days had run its course, and the two communities were openly warring against each other. The story of these years is largely a record of free fights, arson, pillage and desecration. Planned rioting caused by efficient organizations flared up at the slightest provocation, leaving behind a legacy of bitterness and a passion for reprisals. Numerous attempts were made to span the ever-widening gulf between the communities, but each effort drove them further apart. All hope of Hindu-Muslim reconciliation had vanished by the end of 1928.

Throughout the decade, Muslim leaders met with many vicissitudes. There was a good deal of division in their ranks and their mutual relations were often marked by personal feuds. But, in spite of themselves and in the face of compelling apprehensions about the future, they steadily advanced towards solidarity. The country had been recently put on the road leading to a full-fledged system of responsible government. In politics, as in war, victory lies with big battalions. The Hindus, who formed a majority of four to one in India, stood wholly for accelerating the pace of democratization. The Muslim minority's refusal to merge itself into Indian nationalism was based on experience. Unqualified acceptance of democracy as a political goal, would place the Muslim minority in a state of permanent subjection. Majority rule in India was an untried graft on a caste-ridden society from which Hindu nationalism had derived its exclusive character. No governing power in the long history of the country had ever claimed to derive its authority from numbers. The Muslims could not fail to see that democracy was inevitable but were disquieted at the implications of unbridled majority rule. At this stage, they desired nothing more than adequate and effective representation in legislatures and public services. The Hindus dismissed the Muslim demands as extravagant. When the Treaty of Versailles took up the problem of national minorities in Europe and the League of Nations recognized the rights of minorities to employment and for the use of their own language in public offices and culture, the Muslim minority of India tried to relate this to their own problem. If the principles settled by the League were not applied to the Indian situation, the liberalization of political institutions would defeat itself. The community came to look upon separate electorates as its life line, while Hindu opposition merely hardened Muslim opinion. Probably no other constitutional dispute was so continually and so harshly debated as that of separate representation.

As in the preceding decade, Muslim India continued to act as a

barometer of the disturbances taking place in Muslim countries. There was trouble on the frontiers of Iraq over the possession of Mosul oil. Egypt had been sorely disappointed over the Sudan. Palestine was exasperated over the British mandate. The Riff troops were fighting the armies of Spain. The old Hashemite dynasty was driven out of the Hejaz and the country was conquered by Ibn Saud. Afghanistan had undergone a dynastic change preceded by rebellion and anarchy. The news of these developments were reported in great detail by Muslim newspapers day after day. Murray T.Titus, a Christian Missionary, wrote in 1925 that Muslim India was second to none in its zeal for the faith and felt very keenly her burden of responsibility for the welfare of the world of Islam.[1] The nature and extent of this regard can best be gauged from a resolution passed by the All-India *Khilafat* Committee in 1924 expressing anxiety 'at the sudden increase in the military resources of Emir Ali, the recruitment of the army taking place in the part of Palestine occupied by Britain, the presence in Emir Ali's camp of a number of British officers, which facts lend strength to the allegation that Great Britain is secretly helping Emir Ali.' Another *Khilafat* resolution of the same year noted with satisfaction the disappearance from Mecca of Sherif Husain and his family.

Of the Muslim political organizations the *Khilafat* still lingered on, though only a shadow of its former self. The Muslim League, which had lain prostrate and in a state of suspended animation since 1919, was beginning to reassert itself. At first the *Khilafat* and the Muslim League tried to maintain a sort of division of labour between themselves. The *Khilafat* looked after the religious interests of Indian Muslims abroad, and the League concerned itself with issues at home. A third party, or rather a federation of Muslim political parties, the All-Parties Muslim Conference, made its appearance towards the end of 1928 to define the community's attitude on the constitutional question.

The pattern of Hindu politics was more precise. K.M. Pannikar, a Hindu writer, stated that by this time Hindus had come to regard India as their country in a special sense, and looked upon all Muslims as foreigners, believing that by conversion to Islam a Hindu ceased to be an Indian.[2] The Arya Samaj organization was increasingly active and scurrilous attacks on Islam were frequent. Two new Hindu movements began almost immediately after the cessation of non-co-operation. The first one, called *Shuddhi* (literally meaning purification; orthodox Hinduism regards all non-Hindus as unclean), sought to bring Indian Muslims, most of whom were descendants of converts from Hinduism, back into Hinduism. A campaign of conversion was started in selected areas. The other, known as *Sanghtan*, aimed at forging greater unity among the various orders of Hinduism itself. In 1924 the Hindus launched an offensive against the Lucknow Pact and separate electorates. Prominent and representative Hindus and popular Hindu journals missed few opportunities of drawing attention to the danger, internal and external, to an independent India, arising out of the contiguity of North-West India (predominantly Muslim) with Muslim populations beyond. Other leading features of Hindu political thinking

and efforts were a mechanical concept of democracy, a fondness for a strong central government, a marked preference for the safer status of a Dominion rather than the hazards of complete independence, and an unwillingness to stay as a minority even in provinces where Hindus were insignificant in number. There was no note of compromise in all this. The portents of the coming storm were unmistakable. Following the non-co-operation movement, the Congress was soon divided into two camps which called themselves 'Pro-changers' and 'No-changers'; the former wanted to lift the Gandhian embargo on parliamentary activity, the latter persisted in non-cooperation. A furious wrangle between them resulted in success for the Pro-changers though their rivals remained adamant, adhering to their programme of social reform, the 'constructive programme', as they called it.

Released from prison in February 1924, Gandhi went into retirement, apparently remaining out of politics for some time. This helped the emergence of the Hindu *Mahasabha* to a position of commanding influence. This body was started as a multi-purpose organization to take care of the socio-religious interests of the Hindu community, but in 1924 its sphere was expanded to include politics. It battled for Hindu rights, fought elections, began mass conversion of non-Hindus to Hinduism and made countrywide arrangements for the instruction of Hindu youth in the art of 'self-defence'. In the general elections of 1926 the Hindu *Mahasabha* ran its own candidates and scored single successes over the Congress. The frightened Congress leadership drew closer to the *Mahasabha* and from 1927 onwards the opinions expressed by the *Mahasabha* and the decisions adopted by it were promptly re-echoed in Congress resolutions.

The Hindu leaders maintained their contacts with influential radical elements in the political life of Britain. The veil of secrecy, which was only occasionally and inadvertently lifted, suggested that the Hindu view of the Indian situation was backed by important sections of the British Labour Party, which was then the official opposition. Ramsay MacDonald's prejudices and biases were already well known. Another British politician, Lord Olivier, the India Secretary in the Labour Government of 1924, earned Hindu applause by admonishing British Civil servants in India for their 'partiality' towards Muslims. He went even further in public speeches and articles written for periodicals, virtually constituting himself a spokesman of the Congress. The Muslims were apathetic. Unlike the Hindus they had yet to learn the wisdom of the adage that one who explains his case to the arbiter in the absence of the other party will never be disappointed.

This brief account will not be complete without some reference to the theories advanced to explain the prevailing Hindu-Muslim antagonism. One school of thought believed that these antipathies were old and deep-seated and had existed in varying degrees of intensity even before the British came to India. In the eighties of the last century, Tilak and his followers had revived the old intolerance. The partition of Bengal turned it into a perennial malady. The only difference between the past and the present was that current disturbances affected

wider areas and received greater publicity. They argued that the end of non-co-operation was followed by a sense of disillusionment. As the hypnotic effects of the experience wore off, voices were raised against the wisdom of all that had been done. Irregularities detected in the *Khilafat* accounts furnished the critics with ammunition. The unpopularity of the *Khilafat* leaders was visited on the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity they had espoused. Another school connected the turmoil with the proselytizing movement started by the Arya Samaj sect of Hinduism led by Swami Sharaddhananda. This controversial public figure, whose career and activities will be noted presently, had suffered imprisonment for his association with the Congress. His release came, perhaps significantly, long before it was due. He returned to public life, laid the foundations of the *Shuddhi* movement and assumed the leadership of a conversion drive among some backward Muslim communities living in the district of Agra. The Hindu missionaries trained under his inspiration employed several devices. They engaged in religious discussions with the Muslims, distributing pamphlets lampooning Islam and working for orphanges and widow homes to which stray Muslim children and women were lured and converted. Then came the *Tabligh* and *Tanzim*, the Muslim counterparts of *Shuddhi* and *Sanghtan*. It is difficult to measure their relative success, but taken together these four movements did irreparable damage to inter-communal relations. The Congress and Hindu organizations generally fixed the responsibility for Hindu-Muslim dissensions on the third party which, they asserted, was interested in keeping them divided. This view was reinforced by the assumption that the Muslims, as a community, were unpatriotic and were led by a band of reactionaries. The exponents of this idea waxed eloquent over the artificiality of communal differences. They argued that Muslim fears about the future were unreal and that anxieties and misgivings were bound to disappear with the dawn of independence. Still another group ascribed the mess to political reforms which confronted the people with problems which had never arisen before and which had to be solved before the Indians could settle down as a self-governing people. Pannikar stated the proposition thus:

> The communities had long lived without a definition of the relations on which they would exist as one single political entity. The necessity for a definition has arisen now, (and of) an examination of the basis of common life, and the conditions in which they can live together.[3]

Obviously, the last hypothesis has much to commend itself. But the task of discovering this definition was attended with irrational muddle. Public peace was broken over trivial questions like music before mosques and the slaughter of cows, which let loose intense rivalries resulting in bloodshed. Complaints about music being played before mosques had first been made the nineties of the last century in the bigger cities of Western India. The Government stopped the

practice in the interest of public order. Nothing was heard of it for many years. The question suddenly leapt into prominence in the twenties. The Hindus insisted on vindicating their 'civic' right to the use of public streets. The Muslims would not surrender. They would not have their congregational prayer interrupted by Hindu musical processions passing by mosques. The sanctity of the cow was another source of friction. The preservation of this animal is the sacred primordial obligation of every Hindu. But beef happens to be the chief article of Muslim diet and one of the Muslim festivals, called Bakr Id, is celebrated with cow sacrifice by the poorer classes of Muslims. The Muslims not only clung tenaciously to their sacrificial right, but were also sometimes demonstrative in exercising it. The cow to be slaughtered was, in many localities, though not everywhere, smeared with vermillion dye, laden with flower garlands and ceremoniously led to slaughter, the procedure offering an avoidable affront to Hindus. It escaped those who pounced upon the cow and music as the cause of trouble that the reasons lay deeper in what was essentially a clash of cultures. In the fury of passions no leader could preach tolerance and yet keep his following.

An immense crack in Hindu-Muslim relations showed itself as early as August 1921 with the outbreak of what has been called the Moplah revolt. The Moplahs are a race of sturdy, independent and devoutly religious Muslims. Descended from Arab traders and pirates, they inhabited the hills and jungle tracts of South Malabar, in the vicinity of Calicut, on the West coast of India. Administratively, their defiant habits had made them a nuisance for the Government. The origin of the Moplah rising is obscure. But it is certain that it was a chain of related events rather than a single incident. While the Hindus viewed these as acts of aggression against themselves, the Government treated the occurrences as part of a treasonable plot. These two standpoints have been so assiduously canvassed that it is difficult to get at the truth.

Immediately after the event, Hindu propagandists started a war of pamphlets which lasted for some months, each adding more gruesome details of Hindu suffering. Even a cursory reading of these pamphlets would show that these were deliberately put forth to incite the Hindus against the Muslims. One of the numerous stories, entitled *Dastan-i-Zulm* (or the 'Tale of Atrocities'), was published in Amritsar in March 1922. Its contents were avowedly based on the accounts of travellers, reports from relief workers and facts abstracted from newspaper columns. The narrative describes the 'armed' insurrection of the Moplah hordes, their bestial ferocity and the tribulations of their unsuspecting Hindu victims. It charges the Moplahs with cold-blooded murders, forcible conversions and acts of arson and abduction. It gives a graphic description of the process of coercive conversion. If the prey happened to be a male, he was first bathed and then given a 'Muslim' hair cut. He was made to recite the Kalima, led to the mosque to be attired in the distinctive Moplah dress, fed in the Muslim fashion and circumcized in the orthodox way. The initiation of the women into the faith was simpler, after repeating the Kalima, they had to put on

the dyed Moplah female garments and had their ears pierced for earrings.

Another pamphlet, *Malabar ki Khuni Dastan*, (or 'the Bloody Story of Malabar') published from Saharanpur in 1922, purports to have been written after a tour of investigation in the area. It is brief and less picturesque. The author would have the reader believe that every Hindu living in Malabar was asked by his Muslim neighbours to join the cause of the *Khilafat* and to accept Islam. If he obeyed, he was let off. If he did not, he was locked up in his house. Beef was forced into his mouth and his kinsmen were battered under his very eyes. If he still refused to accept, he was hacked to pieces, his corpse thrown into a well and his house set on fire. Temples were desecrated and their idols smashed. Hindu priests were made to wear raw cow hide. One of the two tracts opens with the following remarks:

> Moplahs have committed incredible excesses in their own land. The details must be made known even if it leads to Hindu-Muslim rupture and even if it puts an end to the dream of *Swaraj*. A true follower of Gandhi is bound to speak the truth without calculating consequences. Truth is more precious than Hindu-Muslim unity. It is even above *Swaraj*.[4]

It ends with the exhortation:

> Hindus wake up. Your slumber is fatal. Gird up your loins in self-defence. Your weakness is your undoing. Death is times better than ignoble existence. The woes of your brethren are your own . . . .[5]

Almost every pamphleteer professes to discharge his obligation to truth. How the situation developed, how it was handled by public functionaries and how a rebellion against the British turned into a war of religion between the Hindus and the Muslims are questions which Hindu accounts do not answer.

The report of the committee set up by the central *Khilafat* organization to enquire into the affair[1] threw the initial responsibility for the disturbance on local officials. To begin with, the committee stated, things were normal and there was no sign of a mutiny. The repeated references to 'rebellion' in official announcements were designed to cover up the criminal acts of the administration. The Moplahs, like Muslims in other parts of India, joined the *Khilafat* cause which the Government was out to suppress. Only police savagery made them rebels. The trouble started when the secretary of a local *Khilafat* committee was arrested and tied to a tree. His wife was brought to witness the scene and stripped to the skin while he watched helpless. Further, a Moplah divine, with considerable following, was slapped in the face by a constable for a minor traffic offence. Later, another *Khilafat* worker was falsely implicated for the illicit manufacture of arms. Finally, the police broke into Moplah homes, plundered household effects and, in many cases, inflicted brutal punishments on inmates. As if this was not enough, the police resorted to indiscriminate firing

Excellent fighters as the Moplahs were, they decided to fight to the bitter end. The police and the magistracy were driven out of the territory, leaving behind considerable quantities of arms and ammunition and the Moplahs in control of the situation. The infuriated victors cut off telegraph wires and removed railway tracks, the hated symbols of British power. Up to this time the Moplahs were on the best of terms with the Hindus. As *Khilafatists* they were also Congressites. They went about preaching unity and guarded Hindu houses and property in danger zones.

Two weeks later, the police and military returned with heavy reinforcements and re-established their control. The majority of the Hindus became spies and informers and volunteered information against the rebels. This turned the Moplah wrath on the Hindus. The police freely conspired and set Hindus against Muslims. The Arya Samaj workers, who came in the guise of good Samaritans, worked as auxiliaries. The police and military retribution was terrible. For months the entire Moplah population lived under Martial Law. Official barbarities exceeded those of the military rule in the Punjab. Thousands of Moplahs were liquidated without cause. Hundreds were lodged in prisons and about two hundred were executed after regular or irregular trials.

This account of the episode may be supplemented with some details supplied by the Indian Annual Register. With the temporary suspension of British authority, the Moplahs established a *Khilafat* kingdom and declared a holy war against the rulers. The reports of mass conversion of Hindus to Islam were 'wild'. During the Martial Law Moplahs carried on guerilla warfare from their hiding places in jungles. The Register also cites a glaring instance of administrative cruelty to which history 'rarely affords a parallel'. This was the notorious train tragedy in which one hundred Moplah prisoners were put in a closed and air-tight goods van and despatched by train. When the door was opened at the destination, sixty-six were found dead and the rest on the point of dying. The editor of the Register adds: 'How many such blood-curdling inhumanities lie buried in the dark chapter of Malabar history of this period, time alone will show.'[6]

Today, it is impossible to rescue the truth entombed under the hard crust of inventions. In 1924, Gandhi was informed by Dr Mahmud, who had his facts verified from the Malabar Hindus, that Hindu charges against the Moplahs were grossly exaggerated, that the Moplahs too had their grievances against the Hindus and that there were no forcible conversions. From the evidence placed before him, Gandhi came to the conclusion: 'What the truth is no one knows'.[7] Be that as it may, the Moplah suffering deeply moved Muslim India. There were frantic appeals for help. The response was generous. But from the Hindu side it became the starting point of a rancorous campaign, first against the Moplahs and then against Muslims in general. The Hindu Press and leadership shouted hoarse for revenge and would not rest satisfied unless the 'barbarians' were duly chastised. Under this pressure, the Government adopted a policy of banishing the Moplahs from their homeland and colonizing them in the penal

settlement of the Andamans, in spite of the fact that a Government committee had only recently pronounced against the suitability of the island as a prisoners' colony on grounds of health and climate. In the meantime tempers ran high in both communities.

The days that followed witnessed a frightful outburst of frenzy which led to every form of cruelty. This makes it all the more diffiicult, to compile a faithful record. The responsibility for distorting the truth must rest with the Press and on its coloured and subjective reporting. From the material contained in Hindu and Muslim periodicals, it is possible to construct two entirely divergent versions of history. Even if the narrator is wholly unbiased, he will need the recording pen of an angel to tell the untainted truth. No attempt will, therefore, be made in these pages to fix the blame on one party or the other for this or that happening. Only relevant facts will be set down to assist readers in forming their own judgement. During these fateful days, the peace of the country hung by a fine thread. Intervals of uneasy, almost unnatural, calm were broken by an unabashed display of primitive ferocity. The earlier manifestations of this mood, described by Gandhi in one of his classical statements, may be summarised thus. In one place Hindus pulled down the wall of a mosque, drove Muslims out of the village, informing them that they must desist from building the mosque if they wished to live in the village. In another place, Muslims objected to the playing of music before a mosque. Upon this Hindus desecrated the mosque, beat Muslims and had them prosecuted. In a third place, Muslims looted houses, broke open chests of money and jewellery and outraged the modesty of women. In some instances Hindus played music before mosques with the set purpose of irritating Muslims at the prayer time. In numerous cases women were abducted and converted to the other religion under duress. Hindus established *akhadas* for physical culture and as a means of self-defence. Such preparations naturally added to suspicion and irritation. In Government offices Hindu-Muslim tension assumed a discriminatory character. Wherever a Hindu happened to be the head of a department, he carefully excluded Muslims from Government posts. However, it appeared to Gandhi, that the seat of the trouble was the Punjab. The journals of the province were 'simply scurrilous' and, at times, 'filthy'. Those who edited them excelled each other in abusive epithets and in 'reviling the religion of their opponents'. Gandhi described these incidents as individual occurrences concluding that the mass mind was the reflection of individual opinion.

The two communities picked quarrels over trifles and in all places, in streets, on the public roads and in railway trains. Hindu and Muslim judges and magistrates were generally considered to be incapable of holding the scales of justice even. In cases arising from riots, where popular passions were inflamed, they were known to accept transparently concocted evidence and reject straight-forward cases. Therefore, the accused belonging to either community used all legal expedients to ensure that their cases were not put up for trial before magistrates belonging to the other community. The history of the twenties

is so utterly crowded with bestiality that no apology is needed for inflicting on the reader yet another recital of these atrocities:

> The first grave outbreak of a new series occurred at Multan . . . . . in September 1922 on the occasion of the Muharram festival, and the celebrations in 1923 were marked by serious collisions, of which the most formidable occurred at Saharanpur . . . . ., where the casualties exceeded 300. The year 1924 had a still blacker record with 18 serious riots, in which 86 persons were killed and 776 wounded. The worst storm centre was Kohat . . . . where terrible disturbances arose out of the publication of an anti-Islamic poem of Hindu authorship. The roll of two days' casualties amounted to 36 killed and 145 wounded: extensive looting took place in the bazaars, and house property valued at Rs. 70,000 was destroyed. The riots were followed by a temporary exodus from the town of the entire Hindu population . . . . . There was some improvement in 1925, but it was short-lived, for all previous records were surpassed in 1926 with 36 serious riots and a casualty roll of 2,000. In this year Calcutta took the lead with disturbances which started over the old trouble of music before mosques and developed into an orgy of murderous attacks of hooligans of both camps. Before peace was finally restored 200 shops were looted, 12 sacred buildings were desecrated or destroyed, there were 150 cases of incendiary fire and 1,450 casualties, including 140 deaths.
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> . . . . . the tension had now become so great that the most trivial incidents sufficied to start trouble. The demon of unrest was abroad . . . . . and communal disorder had become the dominant factor of Indian political life . . . . . the year 1927 was as black as its predecessor. Thirty-one serious riots occurred with a casualty roll exceeding 1,600 . . . . .
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> Communal riots were much less frequent in 1928 than in the two previous years, but between February and May 1929 there occurred serious disturbances in Bombay city, which began with collisions between Hindu strikers and Pathan substitutes, and continued, as in Calcutta three years before, with murderous assaults on individuals and wholesale looting of shops by the criminal classes. Before the disorder finally subsided there had been over 1,100 casualties, including nearly 200 deaths. The significance of these riots was that their proximate cause was economic rather than religious.
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> . . . . . (In) March 1931 . . . . . the Cawnpore tragedy shocked the whole of India. In the course of enforced closing of shops, in honour of a Hindu assassin, the Hindus and Muslims of Cawnpore came to blows. This developed into a riot of unprecedented violence and peculiar ferocity . . . . . Murders, arson and looting were widespread for three days . . . . . The death roll . . . . . was probably between four and five hundred—a large number of temples and mosques were desecrated or destroyed, and a very large number of houses were burnt and pillaged . . . . .[18]

We have already noticed briefly some of the generalizations propounded to explain or extenuate this state of affairs. Obviously a

more detailed analysis is called for. Speaking of Mohammad Ali, Jawaharlal Nehru has said:

> After his year of (Congress) Presidentship (i.e. 1923-4), Mohammad Ali gradually drifted away from the Congress . . . . . The process was slow . . . . . But the rift widened, estrangement grew. *Perhaps no particular individual or individuals were to blame for this; it was an inevitable result of certain objective conditions in the country* . . . . .[9]

Mohammad Ali's defection from the Congress was not an isolated act. He withdrew long after thousands of his co-religionists had seceded. The Muslims who stayed behind were not always sure of their own mind or of their standing within their own community. It is the purpose of the next section to show that the 'objective conditions' of which Nehru speaks, did not create themselves. Mischief sprang from the politics of individuals as well as organizations.

3

In a review of the principal factors of Indian politics, the first place must naturally go to Gandhi. So much has been said about him that it is hard to say anything fresh or original. He became a legend in his own lifetime and his writings became the bible of his devotees. To the average Hindu, he was the embodiment of truth and virtue, subordinating the sordid calling of the politician to ethical compulsions. Mahatma Gandhi himself was inquisitive about almost everything under the sun and wrote extensively on numerous subjects beyond the ken of a mere politician. His detractors will be found in both hemispheres. But the chorus of panegyrics has muffled much of hostile opinion. Those who came into contact with him have left fine pen pictures of the Mahatama.

Subhas Chandra Bose, one of the pillars of the Congress at one time, calls him an astute politician on the whole, though liable to err in decisive moments. He adds that Gandhi fully exploited mass psychology, profiting from the weaker traits of the Hindu character.[10] In a remarkable degree his fasts, penances, walking tours and trappings of a half-naked *fakir* gratified their craving for mysticism and supernaturalism and in doing so he led his people towards irrationalism. Gandhi, says Jawaharlal Nehru, was 'consciously and deliberately meek and humble', and 'yet imperious enough when occasion demanded'.[11] He had a sharp eye for loopholes and escape clauses and seldom cared for the letter of the law when that came in his way. In the field of direct action he showed a shrewd sense of timing. It was unusual for him to look far into the future or lay down long-distance programmes. Curiously enough, neither Bose nor Nehru made even a passing reference to that incomprehensible freak, his 'inner voice'. As time went by, Gandhi professed more and more to be guided by an inward light. The genuineness of a spiritual experience or the right of an individual to rely on it need not be questioned. But the Mahatama became an imponderable for those who argued in terms of

logic, reason, right or even expediency. He could go back on his word and repudiate commitments after a later and more compelling imperative from within.

This 'leader of the revolt', as he is affectionately termed by Norman Brown, one of his American admirers, had lived and worked in South Africa for over two decades before he returned to his homeland. He was not enamoured of Indian politics but was drawn into them in spite of himself. Though he organized a mass protest against the Rowlatt Bills, he still trusted British intentions. But the refusal of the Government to listen to him brought out the rebel in him. While his country-wide tours in the heyday of Hindu-Muslim unity were financed out of the *Khilafat* funds, many a Hindu leader chafed at his personal contacts with the *Khilafatists*. When he came out of prison in February 1924, he grieved at his premature release and bemoaned that he was ill-equipped for the responsibilities of the altered situation. He was acutely distressed at the prevailing tension and undertook a three-week fast 'as a self-imposed penance for the wrongs committed by members of different communities, who by their actions had disturbed the inter-communal peace of India'. By this act of self-torture, he hoped to prevent further bloodshed. Under the shadow of this fast, Mohammad Ali, the Congress president for the year, summoned a unity conference which set up a conciliation board to settle mutual disputes as they arose. But the board proved to be powerless and its interventions half-hearted.

In the same year, Gandhi issued his famous statement setting forth his own diagnosis of the causes of the political malady, suggesting a spiritual cure.[12] He wrote that the all-inclusive cause of recurring riots was the loss of faith in non-violence on the part of thinking sections who were unequal to it and the tension was 'but a phase of this tiredness'. The people had to recover their faith and to learn to compose their differences without resort to violence. In his opinion it was the apparently educated who instigated trouble and not the common man. The hooligan came long afterwards, while the real culprit remained hidden, and his offence was either overlooked or condoned. 'Masses will not fight, if their leaders don't want them to fight.' Advance preparations, open or secret (such as *Akhadas*), inevitably led to clashes, and 'when blood boils, prejudice reigns . . Man becomes a beast, and acts as such.'

Both Hindus and Muslims were at fault because neither perceived the relation between means and ends. To the Hindus he said : I grant that cow-protection is vital to Hinduism. But why all this ill-will towards Muslims? Why shut your eyes to the immense cow-slaughter that takes place for the British troops in India. Your laments are insane. They do not save a single cow. He advised the Muslims in much the same way: Do not be perturbed over music before mosques. Your protests make no sense. Virtue lies in being absorbed in your own prayers in the midst of din and noise. You cannot and must not stop music by force. Depend on good neighbourly feelings of Hindus. The sagacious advice lost its grace when he came to divide the relative liability of the two

communities for violence and fastened the entire guilt on the Muslims. He said:

> There is no doubt in my mind that in the majority of quarrels the Hindus come out the second best. My own experience but confirms the opinion that the Mussulman as a rule is a bully, and the Hindu as a rule is a coward. Where there are cowards there will always be bullies.[13]

It was unkind and unfair to have so brusquely censured a whole community. A patient study, if one could be made, would have shown that sometimes one community broke the peace, sometimes the other. But Gandhi presumed Hindu innocence everywhere, an assumption that would not accord with facts. Mohammad Ali, whose faith in Gandhi till then was unbounded, felt deeply hurt. He wrote several articles supporting his dissent with numerous instances, but he was persuaded after some time that the remark had been made in good faith to shame the Muslim for his bluster and the Hindu for his cowardice. The 'coward and bully' phrase, however, was contagious. It passed from mouth to mouth and was repeated ad nauseam by Hindu journals and public men. It soon acquired the force of an argument. The unique authority of the Mahatama came to be cited to prove Hindu impeccability in all that was taking place. Muslims, in general, were indignant at the harsh judgement which did considerable damage to Hindu-Muslim relations. The student of semantics might find in this an interesting evidence of the tyranny of phrases.

In the same statement, Gandhi suggested a few practical remedies. It was no use digging out, he said, a few criminals from their dens and handing them over to the police. It would be best to eliminate the disease by removing its causes. This meant, first and foremost, the acceptance of non-violence as the very condition of our existence. Both communities should refrain from taking the law into their own hands and bind themselves to settle their differences through arbitration or law courts. They should not be swept off their feet by mere reports and rumours. In the next place, he advised the majority community to give up bargaining. Essentially, 'it was for the majority to inspire the minority with confidence in its bona fides. Hindus must have the courage to trust the minorities if they want unity between the different races of India; they should leave the pen in the hands of the minorities, let them have what they wanted, and be satisfied with the residue.[14] These words embodied a truly fine gesture.

With uncanny sureness, Gandhi foresaw an avalanche of lawlessness descending on the country. The immediate future, therefore, held little promise. Suspicion must be dispelled and confidence regenerated. A lasting settlement between Hindus and Muslims could only be based on a pact.[12] Afterwards, he abandoned this position and wrote: Pacts may produce unity. But that unity can never ripen into union. A pact as a basis for a union is worse than useless. As its very nature indicates, a pact is separative in character. A pact cannot produce the desire to accommodate, it cannot instil the spirit of sacrifice, nor can it bind the parties to the main objective. Instead of accommodating

each other, parties to a pact strive to get, as much as possible out of each other. . . . . . Instead of sacrificing for the common cause, parties to the pact are constantly occupied in seeing that the sacrifice made by one is not used for the good of the other. But it was premature to talk of pacts so long as prejudice ruled men's minds. '*Swaraj* must remain a dream without a lasting heart unity between the Hindus and Mussulmans of India', he concluded.

There is much in this statement to deserve serious thought. But Gandhi's utterances on other occasions were less happily conceived. Muslims could understand, and even sympathize with, his solicitude for the protection of the cow, so natural to a Hindu. But such statements as, 'the problem of the cow is no less important than the problem of '*Swaraj*' . . . . . 'We cannot achieve independence unless we can defend the cow',[15] gave the impression that the Gandhian concept of Indian independence would primarily serve the narrower interests of Hinduism. When he presided over a unity conference in Lahore, his remarks implied that he fully shared the current Hindu fear of a Muslim majority in the Punjab and of the proximity of this province to the home of fighting races as a danger to the tranquillity of the entire sub-continent.[16]

In spite of all this, Gandhi's influence over Muslim leadership was still considerable. But he did not choose to exert himself and he retired to Sabarmati *Ashram*, near Ahmedabad, where he continued to spin, meditate and pray, apparently remaining a neutral spectator of the political drama. He wrote on the virtues of *khadi*, home-spun cloth, on the utility of goat's milk, on the injurious effects of inoculations and injections, on the food value of soya beans and so on. About Hindu-Muslim relations he kept his lips sealed. When he was approached and entreated by his former Muslim lieutenants to break his silence and to check the growing rot, he would not stir.[17] This was taken to mean that he was no longer interested in clearing the political atmosphere. When he returned to politics in 1928, his angle had changed, and even if his words did not always indicate the fact, the nature of the causes that he aided or defended could not be mistaken.

After the failure of non-cooperation, the Congress found itself infested with intrigues and dissensions. Its unity was endangered by the grim tourney between the pro-changers and no-changers. The no-changers claimed to be the true followers of the Gandhian doctrine. They held the reforms and parliamentary activities in mortal aversion and pleaded for a programme of social amelioration. Co-operation with the Government, they argued, would consolidate foreign hold over the country, blast the morale of the organization and smother its fighting spirit. The feeling against reform of the pro-changers was as intense. But they argued differently. They advocated 'council entry' only to wreck the constitution by obstruction from within the legislatures. The pro-changers might have failed but for the determined attitude adopted by their leaders, Das and Motilal Nehru. After a prolonged and heated argument, the no-changers had to make a compromise by which individual Congressmen were permitted to contest elections.

But they were forbidden the use of Congress machinery and Congress funds.

In the elections of 1923, the pro-changers, *Swarajists* as they called themselves, scored a striking success. They captured a substantial number of elective seats in some provincial legislatures, notably in the Central Provinces and Bengal. In addition to this, they came to have a solid bloc of their own in the central legislature. Wherever invited, they declined to accept office but their performance as legislators was spectacular. They interested themselves in a wide range of subjects and showed considerable capacity for debate. Their parliamentary methods were closely modelled upon those of the Irish Nationalists in the British House of Commons in the nineteenth century. They sat in their seats stern and humourless, boycotted all social functions, rejected Government demands for grants as often as they could, put dozens of embarrassing questions to the Executive daily, raised all manner of points of order, used every occasion to move adjournment of business and spoke as long and as loud as their lungs permitted. They were determined to make government through councils impossible and to a great degree they succeeded.

When Gandhi came out of internment in February 1924, he sided with the no-changers and denounced the *Swarajist* fondness for constitutionalism. Consequently, his relations with Motilal Nehru were strained for some time but they were reconciled and the old cordiality soon returned. An understanding was arrived at by which it was agreed to leave the promotion of *khadi* to Gandhi and the political work of the Congress to *Swarajists*. As a class, the *Swarajists* wormed themselves back into Gandhi's trust and began to receive his benedictions. His liking for them was expressed in such phrases as 'My conscience is in the keeping of the *Swarajists*' and 'I shall cling to them as a child clings to his mother.'[15]

An interesting change was made in the constitution of the Congress in 1924 at Gandhi's initiative. The membership of the Congress had, so far, carried a small subscription. In order to emphasize its mass character, Gandhi made a motion that spinning should be made compulsory and that a certain quantity of self-spun yarn should replace cash payment of membership fee. This was resolutely opposed by the *Swarajists* with the result that both had to be made alternative conditions of membership. In the same year, the *Swarajists* sponsored a resolution in the central legislature demanding a round table conference with unfettered powers to draft a new constitution for the country. The resolution was carried but nothing came of it. This was the origin of the idea of an Indian constituent assembly. Congress hopes, which ran high when a Labour ministry came into power in Britain in 1924, were disappointed when the Government in Britain sanctioned a drastic coercive measure for the suppression of political offences in Bengal. In spite of this legislation which contradicted the Labour party's India policy, the Congress-Labour alliance, though seemingly strained, remained intact. About this time, Congress circles started unobtrusive attacks on the system of separate representation.

Mr Satyamurthi, a *Swarajist* member of the Madras legislature, released for publication a private communication from Lord Olivier, stating that separate electorates were antagonistic to the proper working of democratic institutions.[19] The Muslims were astonished at the manner in which a responsible Minister of the Crown had chosen to express himself on a matter of consequence. This was impugned in Parliament, but as the Congress was still officially pledged to the Lucknow Pact, the matter was allowed to rest there.

Though the Congress and the Hindus, in general, complained about the inadequacy of the Montagu reforms, those Hindus who belonged to a Muslim majority province like the Punjab, condemned them as dangerous. They thought that the transfer of power from Britain was desirable if it benefited the Hindus, but unsafe if it helped others. They would have been happy if the measure of control ceded to Indian (in this particular instance, Muslim) hands were withdrawn by the British.[20]

In the later twenties, circumstances drove the Congress into the arms of the Hindu *Mahasabha* and at the close of the decade both spoke the same language, though with slightly varying accents. Jawaharal Nehru has recorded that it was the easiest thing for Hindu communalists to speak in the name of nationalism and that many a Congressman was a communalist under his nationalist cloak.[21] But we can hardly believe him when he says that the Congress leadership stood firm and refused to side with either community, Hindu or Muslim.[22] It was precisely this lack of firmness which was the bane of the Congress. Had it held its head high amidst what Nehru loves to call, 'petty squabbles', it might yet have preserved a semblance of national character. But it became a party to those very 'squabbles' and climbed down from its arbitral pedestal. The story of this transition has been told by Jawaharlal Nehru in his usual non-committal fashion and by Mohammad Ali with characteristic candour. It was unfortunate for the Congress that Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lajpat Rai, the two veteran *Mahasabha* leaders, then dominated its counsels. Lajpat Rai was overbearing to a degree. He defied the Congress, deserted the *Swarajist* party and gave a tough fight to the Congress in the 1926 elections. He was soon included in the All-India Congress Committee and had attended its meeting only a few days before his death in 1928.[23]

A particularly honest and upright politician of saintly character and religious temperament, Das was a poet of distinction and had a poet's emotional outlook. One of his friends wrote: 'He was imbued with an Englishman's spirit of freedom; he was in that sense anglicized to the core. Add the bulldog will of an Englishman to the celtic emotionalism of the Bengali, and you get an idea of C.R. Das.,[24] He was a lawyer by profession, entering politics rather late in life. But his rise was meteoric though his active political career lasted only for five years. Das personally disliked the boycott of councils and law-courts. But he bowed before the majority verdict and gave up a princely legal practice. His sacrifice made a big impression and marked him out as the idol of the masses. In due course, he was jailed for his part in the boycott movement. When he was set at

liberty, non-co-operation had petered out and the Congress was without a plan of action. Das advocated a change of tactics and revived the old idea of council entry. The failure of non-co-operation won him large support among the non-co-operators themselves. He preached the resumption of the struggle against bureaucracy on every front and advised the Congress to contest all elections, as election campaigns would offer a good platform for influencing the masses. He had to face fanatical opposition for his 'heresy'. Elected president of the Congress in 1923, opponents made his position untenable and he had to go. Nevertheless, his overpowering personality and great intellectual stature saved him. He finally had his way when the interdict on council entry was quashed, while the non-co-operators remained truculent.

Das led the *Swarajists* in the Bengal legislature, and, as long as he lived, no ministry could function in the province. As Mayor of the Calcutta Corporation, he cut short red tape and improved the quality of civic services. His Mayoralty caused as much annoyance to the Government as his leadership in the council. One of his most courageous acts was to sign an agreement with the *Khilafat* leaders pledging forty per cent of the seats in the provincial legislature and the same proportion of places in the administration of the province for Muslims. The Muslims of Bengal constituted fifty-four per cent of the population of the province. Under the existing conditions this proved reassuring to the Muslim community. While the terms of the pact gratified the Muslims, the Hindus raised a storm of protest at the 'surrender'. But Das stood his ground and ignored the opposition. He passed away in June 1925 at the meridian of his power and glory. His death was a colossal misfortune. Gifted with sound political instinct, he never hesitated to pay for his convictions. His personality was a powerful cementing factor in the *Swaraj* party. Some of his political stature was due to his Muslim following, for the large number of his adherents in the Bengal legislature consisted of Muslims elected through separate electorates who placed implicit trust in him and did not waver even when the Government tried to seduce them. He was believed to be in contact with the Government about a political settlement, but the negotiations were terminated with his death. After his demise the Muslims walked out of the *Swaraj* party. Experience had shown them that Hindu *Swarajists* would behave as Hindus first and as nationalists afterwards. These fears came true. As a body the Hindu *Swarajists* voted against a resolution demanding a much-needed grant of money for improved educational facilities at the Dacca University. The Congress not only ignored Muslim demands but also repudiated Das' Hindu-Muslim pact.

Endowed with courtly manners, Motilal Nehru joined the Congress when it was a rendezvous of moderates. But he rode the waves and floated along with the current finding himself in extremist company. It has been surmised that the transformation was caused by the influence of his son who became the ideological father. Motilal presided over the Congress committee of inquiry into the administration of Martial Law at Amritsar and then over the Congress of 1919. He supported the programme of non-co-operation and may have done

his bit in getting it accepted. In 1922, he came under the influence of Das and revolted against the Congress ban on councils. Utterly insensible to considerations of party discipline, he brusquely informed Mohammad Ali that he would keep at a distance of two hundred miles from the Congress if he were overruled.[25] The elections of 1923 brought him to the central legislature at the head of some forty-five followers. He was decidedly the leading figure in the chamber. According to Jawaharlal Nehru his great assets were a practical turn of mind and organizing ability combined with an imperious temper. 'Strong and unbending,' he could not tolerate opposition or suffer fools evoking loyalty as well as opposition.[26] This is a filial tribute and naturally errs on the side of kindliness. Subhas Chandra Bose's judgement that Motilal lacked the 'emotional appeal that could hold a party through calm and storm,[27] is much nearer the truth and sums up his character as a party leader. The *Swarajists* worked vigorously in the Assembly. Moti Lal himself took to work 'like a duck to water'. It agreed so well with his legal training. In the beginning, he was a martinet. Two Muslim *Swarajists* who failed to follow the party whip in parliamentary divisions over the separation of Sind from Bombay and the introduction of reforms in the North-West Frontier Province were expelled. But gradually harmony was broken and secessions began. While the leader freely talked of amputating the diseased limb and made an example of two Muslim recalcitrants, he found himself powerless against Hindu rebels. Jawaharlal Nehru, who rounds off the story in a few short sentences, observes, 'then came the elections, and these demand funds which had to come from the rich. So these rich people had to be kept in good humour, and some were even asked to become *Swarajist* candidates', and then 'work in councils demands compromises', and that he (Motilal) became 'a little disgusted'[28] and 'rather cynical' in his later years. But thereby hangs a tale. The story of 'compromises' and 'cynicism'[29] can best be described in the words of C.S. Ranga Iyer, himself a member of the *Swarajist* group in the central legislature:

The elections of 1926 were fought on national versus communal lines. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai fought Pandit Motilal Nehru and Mr Srinivasa Iyenger, on behalf of the Hindu *Mahasabha* against the Congress and its pro-Muslim nationalism. Mr Srinivasa Iyenger, who is a very energetic politician and capable of organizing his forces, captured a large number of seats in South India. Pandit Motilal, who has the special gift of riding roughshod over the feelings of his friends and opponents . . . . . met with what he himself mournfully described as a 'veritable rout'. Every Hindu Congress candidate in the U.P. was defeated . . . . . Pandit Motilal Nehru himself would have lost his seat had not Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya with his usual generosity given him an uncontested seat.

The success of the Hindu *Mahasabha* made a profound impression on the Congress leader, who practically accepted the Hindu position and surrendered to Hindu *Mahasabha* . . . . .

In the Assembly leadership passed in effect from the hands of the

Congress Pandit to the *Mahasabha* Pandit. The two parties (i.e. Congress and *Mahasabha*) which virtually followed identical policies chose to sit in separate blocs, and Pandit Malaviya's lead was invariably followed.[30]

Ranga Iyer ascribes the Congress defeat in the elections of 1926 to the lack of drive in the Congress leadership, the lack of character in the Congress party, which was being eaten up by internal jealousy, and above all to the personal failings of Motilal himself, who got into endless trouble with his followers and did not have the ordinary intelligence of a leader 'to merge his ego in the greater ego of his own party, and still greater ego of his country and whose squabbles with contemporaries remind one of the happenings in the Italian republics in the Middle Ages where personal animosities of leaders used to be the basis for political factions.'[31]

Jawaharlal Nehru's position in politics can best be studied with reference to his autobiographical narrative. Master of a direct style of English prose, he can successfully communicate his enthusiasm as well as prejudices to his reader. He loves to indulge in philosophical abstractions and has little use for facts which disprove his thesis.

Nehru threw up his legal practice in 1920 to join the boycott and was gaoled. In the conflict between the pro-changers and the no-changers, he joined forces with the latter. Das' efforts to win his sympathies were soon frustrated. As the communal situation worsened, to quote his own words, Nehru 'moved away from the religious outlook on life and politics', and felt that he 'did not fit in with the developments in the country'. He visualized the future in terms of 'a different social order and a different political framework, and not merely the Indianized edition of the present order'. The removal of financial and economic chains was as important as political emancipation. That is why he pleaded for revolutionary methods and condemned the shallow minds that approached politics in a catch-penny spirit.[32] In his opinion communalism issued from political myopia for communalists had no clear aims and ideals. They exploited religion for personal ends. Communal demands had nothing to do with the betterment of the masses whose horizon was not limited by seats in legislatures or representation in public services. The benefits resulting from the acceptance of these demands would serve to perpetuate the prerogatives of the upper classes who clamoured for them. Communal leaders blocked the road to freedom by playing into the hands of the 'third party'. It will be immediately recognized that Nehru's woolly phraseology is the typical expression of Congress propagandists who invariably point to the 'third party' as the most convenient scapegoat to absolve themselves of their own share of responsibility in aiding the communal disorder and who waited for the elimination of the 'third party' to create conditions necessary for dictating a political settlement to the minority. But he does make a grudging admission of the justice of Muslim communalism on account of 'the maldistribution of wealth and opportunities between Hindus and Muslims in the Punjab, Bengal

and Sind', adding that 'Muslim communal leaders did represent some mass elements and gained strength thereby.'[33]

Ostensibly professing advanced views, Nehru was, nevertheless, a loyal follower of Gandhi. His radicalism could contrive its own reasons for making common cause with orthodoxy and obscurantism. He has vividly described how he joined Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya in defying a perfectly legitimate Government ban on the traditional mass Hindu bath in the Ganges which might have unleashed a deadly epidemic.[34] This happened in the twenties. In 1937, the Government proposed to establish a central abattoir at Lahore to prevent wastage in meeting the beef requirements of the defence forces. Hindu India was outraged at the plan and made impetuous appeals against it. In due course, Nehru joined the chorus, on humanitarian grounds.[35]

A lawyer by profession, Lajpat Rai came into limelight in the first decade of the century and was deported for taking a prominent part in the political movement. He returned to India after a few years and presided over the Calcutta Congress of October 1920. Appointed to a unity committee in 1923, he signed the abortive Solan Pact on behalf of the Congress; the agreement, assailed by the *Mahasabha* and denounced by the Congress, was well-received by the Muslim community and might have contributed to a more durable understanding. A marked change came over Lajpat Rai himself shortly after. His new confession of faith was embodied in his famous thirteen points which included the separation of religion from politics, the break-up of all social barriers, discarding all extra-territorial sympathies, an intense patriotism which would exclude all else, acceptance of the *Shuddhi* movement, support of proportional representation instead of separate electorates. He further recommended the division of the Punjab into two provinces as the only way to make majority rule effective.[36]

Obviously, this discourse was addressed to the Muslims. The proposed partition of the Punjab to 'make majority rule effective' was a transparent device to rescue the Punjab Hindus from their minority status in the province. Like other Hindu leaders, Lajpat Rai also felt alarmed at the continuous bloc of Asian Muslim countries situated to the North-West of India. He confided some of his difficulties on this subject to C.R. Das in a private letter which reads as follows:

> There is one point more which has been troubling me very much of late and one which I want you to think carefully and that is the question of Hindu-Mohammedan unity. I have devoted most of my time during the last six months to the study of Muslim history and Muslim law and I am inclined to think it is neither possible nor practicable. Assuming and admitting the sincerity of Mohammedan leaders in the non-co-operation movement, I think their religion provides effective bar to anything of the kind.
>
> You remember the conversation I reported to you in Calcutta which I had with Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr. Kitchlu. There is no finer Mohammedan in India than Hakim Ajmal Khan, but can any Muslim leader override the Koran? I can only hope that my reading of the Islamic law is incorrect.

And nothing would relieve me more than to be convinced that it is so. But if it is right it comes to this, that although we can unite against the British we cannot do so to rule Hindustan on British lines. We cannot do so to rule Hindustan on democratic lines.

What then is the remedy? I am not afraid of the seven crores of Mussulmans. But I think the seven crores in Hindustan plus the armed hosts of Afghanistan, Central Asia, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Turkey, will be irresistible.

I do honsetly and sincerely believe in the necessity or desirability of Hindu-Muslim unity. I am fully prepared to trust the Muslim leaders. But what about the injunctions of the Koran and *Hadis*? The leaders cannot override them. Are we then doomed? I hope your learned mind and wise head will find some way out of this difficulty.[37]

This fear of the combined Muslim 'hosts' continued to haunt the Hindu mind. Nervousness was openly and forcefully expressed by Hindu leaders in public and it influenced their ideas concerning the constitutional set-up in an independent India. In 1926 Lajpat Rai resigned from the *Swarajist* party accusing it of malevolent intentions towards the Hindus. He refused to join the temporary *Swarajist* boycott of the central legislature on the ground that it would constitute breach of faith with Hindu voters. Motilal Nehru twitted this solicitude for Hindu rights as characteristic electioneering propaganda. But the *Mahasabha* tide was in the ascendant and Motilal himself could not keep his own head above the water for long.

The following extract taken from Lajpat Rai's presidential address to the Hindu political conference of Sind will give an idea of Lajpat Rai's hopes and fears:

If the Hindus put their own house in order they would soon be strong enough to cope with the combined forces of the British Government and the Muslim community.[38]

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the well-beloved leader of Hindu India, had sat in the Congress since 1886 and in the central legislature since 1910. He had tremendous energy and an immense organizing capacity. He conceived and carried out the project of a Hindu university at Benares. His living was exceedingly simple. Hindu writers dwell on his virtues in superlatives. Jawaharlal Nehru calls him 'a gentle and a winning personality,'[39] while the well-known Liberal C.Y. Chintamani says that he was 'full of the milk of human kindness.'[40] An authority on Hindu law and religion, Madan Mohan Malaviya always went to the ancient Hindu scriptures to discover reasons for supporting or opposing legislative measures and governmental policies. He followed up the work of Dayananda and the Arya Samaj in creating a common Hindu sentiment and Hindu consciousness in the country. One of his closest associates in the field of politics, Mr Kelkar, wrote of him:

He looks at the Hindu renaissance in all its aspects, and in all its details ..... (and did) all that was in his power ..... to rehabilitate or conso-

lidate the fragments of Hindu culture that were not all yet lost . . . . . (He shook up the Hindus when they had been) dazed into self-forgetfulness by the oppressive fragrance . . . . . of Muslim culture.[41]

Indeed, he was the most orthodox of Brahmins. From his earliest years, he had resolved never to pollute himself by eating food or taking drink from anyone outside his small caste. This determination caused him no end of inconvenience. He was often compelled to prepare his own meals.[42] Religious scruples prevented him from crossing the seas for the greater part of his life and when at long last he did go to Britain in 1930 to attend the Round Table Conference, his action was extolled as a unique act of patriotism and self-sacrifice. A Parsi nationalist acclaimed it as 'a landmark in the acceleration of Hindu social spirit, expanding towards humanitarianism.'[43]

In the beginning of his public career, Malaviya dedicated himself to the promotion of Hindu interests. That is why he was adored and idolized by the Hindu community. He discontinued his legal practice to prepare the case for the adoption of Hindi as the *lingua franca* of India. The plea was laid before Sir Anthony (later Lord) MacDonnel who approved of its argument and issued the ordinance of 1900 raising Hindi to a footing of equality with Urdu in the law-courts of the North-Western, later the United Provinces.[44] Malaviya differed with Gandhi and briefly broke away from the Congress in 1920. He was the principal organizer of the Hindu *Mahasabha* and its most popular and authoritative spokesman. Frequent were his lamentations over the disunity prevailing among his co-religionists and he sought to base Hindu solidarity on the Hindu hatred of Islam and the Muslims. His references to Muslims were generally oblique and pungent. A lengthy review of the real, distorted or imaginary incidents of the molestation of Hindu women at the hands of 'depraved characters', implying the Muslims, became the favourite subject of his numerous public orations. When after the Multan riot of 1922 the Hindu *Mahasabha* came out with the slogan 'Multan must be avenged', Malaviya's incendiary utterances put his followers on the war path and nearly carried the country to the brink of a calamity. On 25 September 1922, he addressed a huge gathering at Lahore and delivered a long-winded speech, exhorting the Hindus to meet tyranny with force and advising them to band together against the aggressor. He continued:

If I live on, I shall see to it that every (Hindu woman) learns the use of fire-arms, so that she can give fight for her honour. But O men! how dare you face your womenfolk? If you have any stuff in you, you should know how to keep the enemy at bay.[45]

Needless to add that the enemy referred to was no other than the Muslim. He ended in the same strain:

Gentle folk, so long as you fear rascals, they will continue to be impudent. They only dread the big stick. Give them a hard fight . . . . . This is the first post of *Swaraj*.[46]

In his presidential address to the Hindu *Mahasabha* in December 1922, he categorically stated his only recipe for Hindu-Muslim unity:

> . . . . . it was that each should feel that the other was strong enough to ward off successfully any unjust attack by the other and thus alone harmony could be maintained.[47]

This virtually amounts to the doctrine that preparation for war is the surest guarantee of peace. At the next annual session of the same organization, he used even stronger language, reminding the Hindu community of the 'inhuman, brutal and unparalleled atrocities' to which the Hindus were subjected in East Bengal in 1916 when a large number of Hindu women had to drown themselves in rivers and tanks to protect their honour.[48] Whenever Malaviya chose to whip up Hindu feeling, the lead was faithfully followed by lesser lights in the *Mahasabha* hierarchy. Muslim omissions and commissions were magnified and denounced from the pulpit, the platform and the newspaper. They were echoed and re-echoed and their reverbrations were never allowed to die.

Against this background it is hard to subscribe to the statement that Malaviya was the last man 'to utter a harsh or unkind word' or that 'it was impossible to discover in him any trace of hostility towards Muslims[49]. Jawaharlal Nehru has recorded that Malaviya continued to remain in the Congress in spite of his basic affiliation with the Hindu *Mahasabha* and that though he differed from the Congress policies and did not carry out its mandates, 'he was greatly respected and always welcome to it[50]'. This incongruity in Malaviya's political loyalties struck Nehru as an 'attempt to march in opposite directions' simultaneously. But Malaviya's mind was singularly free from confusion. It is difficult to accuse him of inconsistency or duplicity. Probably his mission was to obtain Congress support for the furtherance of *Mahasabha* aims and in this his success was undoubted.

Popularly known as *devta-swarup* (god incarnate), Bhai Parmanand was a life-long devotee of the Arya Samaj and one of the most influential Hindu leaders of North-Western India. He graduated in History, worked as a college lecturer and then left teaching for journalism and politics. In the days of the Punjab Martial Law, he was tried for treason, condemned to death, but was reprieved and released after two years. At the end of his public career, he sat in the central legislature. Bhai Parmanand was a keen sociologist who studied History from an unusual angle. For him History was nothing if it could not subordinate itself to the purposes of a nation-builder. He writes that the advent of Islam inflicted a deep wound on India and that Hindu history since the Muslim incursion was a long and dismal story of suffering and sacrifice. A 'true' history of India will have to be a record of the Hindu struggle against foreign tyranny. He quotes specific instances to prove that the torch of resistance to Islam was kept alive as much by Hindus who took service with Muslim rulers as by those who fought them. According to this reading of history, Hindu agony ended with the death of Aurangzeb.

Parmanand was equally unsparing in his criticism of British rule and Western education. The British conquest of India, he says, was begun with the sword and completed with the help of Western education which changed our values and strengthened our fetters. In a fatal moment the Arya Samaj decided to be a party to the dissemination of Western education, enslaved itself to an alien system and bartered away its ideals. Its schools and colleges stifled the spirit of religion and turned out worshippers of Mammon. Parmanand admitted a number of Hindu weaknesses among which were Western education, child marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage, untouchability, caste system, internal dissensions, close marriages, love of money, inability to protect the honour of womenfolk. But in spite of their faults, Hindus, in his estimation, were a calculating and dependable people who invariably thought carefully before taking a decision. He did not regard the Arya Samaj as a new creed, but accepted it as the rightful descendant of the old Hindu tradition; it had the dual role of defending the country and protecting its religion. 'Hindus are scattered like the particles of sand; they will coalesce under the leadership of the *Samaj* and acquire the qualities of steel.' He reminded the Hindus of a religious injunction which bids them to stay together and think the same thoughts. If they did this, the *Samaj* will protect the cow ban untouchability, put down internal bickerings and inculcate the love of Hindi, 'our own language'. The knowledge of Hindi and the ability to impart it to children is to be treated as part of mother-craft. After all, what was it that divided Hindus and Muslims except language and religion. Again and again, he bemoaned the decline in Hindu population registered by every decennial census. Whereas other communities were procreating rapidly, Hindus were being left behind in the race. The simplest method of increasing Hindu numbers was to make an energetic bid to reclaim the lost sheep of Hinduism and make India a land of Hindus alone. This was easy enough and he felt sure that Hindu wealth would go a long way in accomplishing the dream.

Parmanand's ideas on the Hindu-Muslim question follow from the foregoing propositions. For him unity between the two was unthinkable. Islam does not countenance amity with infidels; even when the Muslims pretended to get along with the Hindus, they seldom lost sight of their own purposes; through the revival of the *Khilafat* they laboured for the supremacy of Islam in Asia; they did not look up to India as their homeland; Gandhi tried to indoctrinate them with non-violence without success. Muslims paid lip service to his teaching but went their own way. The solution lay in either the Hindus assimilating the entire Muslim population of the sub-continent or being eventually assimilated by the alien intruders. Rejecting both as impractical he proceeds to outline a solution of his own: 'It struck me *a long time ago* that the only satisfactory avenue to unity is to effect complete severance between the two peoples'; India could be partitioned in such a manner as to secure the supremacy of Islam in one zone and that of Hinduism in the other. Under this plan some exchange of population would be inevitable. People with strong religious feelings who found themselves in the wrong region will have to migrate to the other, but until that

time arrived, Hinduism would do well to purge itself from within and keep alive its pugnacity. Parmanand, like Malaviya, encouraged Hindu-Muslim trials of strength but, unlike him, he dwelt directly on the utility of war. He theorized that long spells of peace led to stagnation and pacifism. 'The aggressiveness of the present-day Muslims has certainly done us good. It has shaken the Hindus out of their placidity. Let us look at these disturbances in a different way. Every evil has its bright facet'[54].

The doctrines described above were set forth by Parmanand in an Urdu book, *Arya Samaj aur Hindu Sanghtan*, published from Lahore in 1923 and were propagated daily by his paper, the *Hindu*, of Lahore. The unique position of importance that Parmanand occupied in the Hindu society and the Arya Samaj lent special weight to his ideas and advocacies.

Sharaddhanand played a noteworthy part in the politico-religious controversies of the day. He started as a pleasure-loving agnostic but his association with the Arya Samaj is said to have changed the course of his life. He worked single-handed for the establishment of a Sanskrit academy at Hardwar, on the bank of the river Ganges, where Hindu young men were educated and trained in the Arya Samaj tradition. A Punjabi by birth, Sharaddhanand settled down in Delhi and joined the Indian National Congress under which he held several local offices. He was gaoled for a political offence and was released before the expiry of his sentence. Thence he placed himself at the head of the *Shuddhi* and *Sanghtan* movements which he may have planned during his imprisonment. Some Hindu writers aver that Sharaddhanand abandoned all hope of Hindu-Muslim unity after the disturbances of Malabar, Multan, Saharanpur and Kohat and that he was compelled to attend to Hindu needs first. There is an obvious ambiguity in chronology. The *Samajist* movements came before all riots except that of Malabar. Nor is it correct to say that *Shuddhi* and *Sanghtan* were the Hindu answer to the Muslim movements of *Tabligh* and *Tanzim*. In fact, the latter followed the former. The mass movement to bring every Muslim into the Hindu fold was candidly political. In Gandhi's opinion Hinduism was not a proselytizing religion and had no room for converts.[52] Still he spoke of Sharaddhanand as a man with plenty of faith in himself and his mission; though 'brave and intrepid' he was 'hasty and easily ruffled'. The Arya Samaj, observed Gandhi, had given him a 'narrow outlook' and an abundance of pugnacity.[53]

The corps of young men that Sharaddhanand put into the field was tough material. Keen and well-informed, they had the virtues of simplicity and self-denial. Like missionaries of old, they wandered from village to village and traversed vast distances on foot. They slept on the ground and ate simple food. They did not accept hospitality or solicit subscriptions.[54] But their enthusiasm ran ahead of discretion. In the course of their preaching, they referred to other religions and their founders in an unbecoming, often vulgar, language. Gandhi had to protest against their methods, deploring that an Arya Samaj preacher was 'never so happy as when he reviled other faiths'[55]. In a country where religious questions can arouse the strongest emotions this was

bound to aggravate the situation. In December 1926, Sharaddhanand was killed by a desperate Muslim fanatic. His death intensified the strife that he had begun in his lifetime. There was an unsurpassed eruption of vituperations in the Hindu Press, not only against the culprit, who had merely acted as an individual but also against the entire Muslim community and the 'religion' which sanctioned methods of bloodshed and murder. Madan Mohan Malaviya publicly eulogized the 'martyr' as a noble patriot and an honourable leader of the community. The *Mahasabha* started a public fund to raise a memorial to the 'departed hero'.

Founded in the early twenties, the Hindu *Mahasabha* rapidly rose in influence and soon began to overshadow the Congress. Describing itself as 'national to the core', the *Mahasabha* asserted that nationalism was synonymous with Hinduism. Its leaders disavowed antagonism to Muslims and passed numerous resolutions about the necessity of promoting better relations between the communities. Actually, the *Mahasabha* formed a united Hindu front against the Muslims and its forum was a graveyard of Hindu-Muslim unity. An idea of the principal lines of Hindu *Mahasabha* thought can be gained from a perusal of its proceedings for the years 1924, 1925, 1926 and 1927 as reproduced in the relevant volumes of the *Indian Annual Register*. A resume of these is as follows.

While Muslim interests were being treated as a class by themselves, Hindu rights were nowhere safe. The Hindu community was faced with total extinction; while *Swaraj* was desirable it would remain a dream so long as Hindus did not unite among themselves. The Hindus had helped the Muslims in the *Khilafat* movement and braved many a tribulation, but the result was Malabar, Multan and Kohat. If the Hindus were strong and well-organized, the Muslims would woo them. Unity would never be brought about by pacts. Daily riots in the country were a clear evidence of Muslim high-handedness. The Hindus must be supreme over the land in which they have lived for centuries. In order to achieve this supremacy every Hindu must strive hard to make a success of *Shuddhi* and *Sanghtan*. *Shuddhi* was not a modern concept, but as old as Hinduism itself. Even if Hinduism had never been a proselytizing religion in the past, it might become one under the new stresses. If Muslims converted other people to their faith, there was no harm if the Hindus did the same; *Swaraj* was not worth having if it had to be purchased at the cost of Hinduism. The Hindus should rid themselves of an innate feeling of inferiority and should teach their children to be lion-hearted in the defence of their faith. It was their sacred obligation to protect their women and children. If they had true Brahmins among them, the ghastly cow-slaughter would have ceased for ever. Untouchability, which only helped to swell the number of Muslims in India, must go. The moment an untouchable embraced Islam, he ceased to be an untouchable. The numerical strength of the Hindus should be increased by every possible means.

It was further stated that the Muslims with their connections and attachments outside India had managed to keep in touch with what was happening in other Muslim countries. Anxiety was expressed particu-

larly over the Hindu minority in the North West Frontier Province. The best guarantee for the protection of its non-Muslim population and otherwise against foreign aggression lay in keeping the province without representative institutions. India should have a unitary government with provincial and local governments deriving their power from the central government. There should be no redistribution of provinces for the purpose of manufacturing majorities. Separate electorates were productive of sectional jealousies and should be discontinued. The playing of music before mosques was an inherent Hindu right and must not be interfered with.

These arguments had their effect and created conditions which boded ill for peace between the communities. It will be remembered that the Hindu *Mahasabha* decided to fight the elections in 1926. Motilal Nehru protested against the decision, arguing that the *Mahasabha* was incapable of acting as a political caucus by the very nature of its composition. He warned that its efforts at 'strengthening and unifying Hindus' would end in the total disruption of Indian society. But he was not heeded. The *Mahasabha* came out of the electoral conflict with flying colours. The Congress reeled under the blow and was driven towards conformity with Hindu *Mahasabha* policies. That is how the 'disruption of society' was prevented. The dividing line between the two was almost obliterated.

As the decade began, the All-India Muslim League was almost lifeless and remained so for about four years. It was revived in 1924. Though its composition was by no means democratic, it comprised every shade of Muslim opinion. It would be unjust to characterize it as a refuge of academic and arm-chair politicians. The League did not follow the Congress policy of obstruction in legislatures and held that Indian democracy could only be based on mutual security. In 1924, it made a polite request to the Hindu *Mahasabha* to relax the campaign of *Shuddhi* and dissociate itself from *Sanghtan*. In the same year a resolution soliciting Congress help in resolving the Hindu-Muslim tangle was passed and conveyed to the Congress. But it was not even acknowledged. After three years of debate and discussion the League crystalized the solution of India's constitutional problem into five propositions which included adequate and effective representation of minorities in every province, separate electoral representation, the preservation of the territorial integrity of the Muslim majority provinces of the Punjab and Bengal, full civil liberty for all citizens, and a convention prescribing withdrawal of any legislative project opposed by a three-fourth membership of either community. Gradually these demands were adopted by other Muslim organizations.

The deliberations of the League in 1924 were conducted in a conciliatory spirit. The presidential address ended with the following observations.

A common bond unites all of us who have started on the march towards the goal, and that bond is the service of the motherland. Ennobling and inspiring sentiment has fired the imagination of us all. Worship of the motherland has brought to her altar the philosophical

Brahmin, the brilliant Bengali, the vigorous Maratha, the sturdy Sikh, the refined Indian Christian, the cultured Zoroastrian, and the austere unidolatrous Muslim, yes, even to the Muslim this new worship is no idolatory.[56]

But it was difficult to sustain this mood of forbearance amidst continuous affrays. The League president for the year 1925, Abdur Rahim, who had recently experienced a personal frustration at the hands of Bengal *Swarajists*, stated his views with caustic clarity:

> There are some Englishmen unable to realise the need for separate Indian organizations for Hindus and Muslims . . . . they are possessed with the idea that what differentiates Hindus and Muslims is merely religion, and differences of religion should not interfere with the consideration of political problems. How we all wish that it were so.
>
> The Hindus and Muslims are not two religious sects like the Protestants and Catholics of England, but form two distinct communities of peoples, and so they regard themselves. Their respective attitude towards life, distinctive culture, civilization and social habits, their traditions and history, no less than their religion, divide them so completely that the fact that they have lived in the same country for nearly 1,000 years has contributed hardly anything to their fusion into a nation . . . . the English panacea of nationalism has brought not more unity, but worse disunion . . . . The mischievous activities of a certain class of Hindu politicians . . . . unfortunately appeal to the lower instincts of the community, their professed object being to convert Muslims in millions into Hindus, and to train Hindus in self-defence. The Muslims regard these movements as the most serious challenge to their religion which they have ever had to meet. I doubt if at any time in the history of India the relations between the two communities generally were so severely strained as at present. In fact, some of the Hindu leaders have talked pubbily of driving out the Muslims from India, as Spaniards expelled the Moors from Spain, that is unless they perform *Shuddhi* and become Hindus, or submit to their full political programme . . .[57]

And again:

> Any of us Indian Muslims, travelling for instance in Afghanistan, Persia, Central Asia, among Chinese Muslims, Arabs, and Turks would at once be made at home and would not find anything to which we are not accustomed. On the contrary in India we find ourselves in all social matters aliens when we cross the street and enter that part of the town where our fellow townsmen live . . . .[58]

This latter picture is perhaps overdrawn, but the two passages taken together expound the Muslim thesis laying claim to a separate Muslim nationality and anticipate the language of the League platform in the forties. The internal differences of the League came to a head in 1926 and 1927. Various factions competed with one another in capturing the League machinery and using it for their own ends. Viewed in re-

trospect, their differences, emphasized and accentuated by the lack of a firm leadership, were far less serious than they appeared to their contemporaries.

In the twenties Jinnah was still looked upon as 'the nationalist' among the Muslims of India. In the central legislature, where he led the Independent group, he was acknowledged as the most polished debater. He seldom used a complex sentence or a complicated phrase and scrupulously avoided the tricks of oratory. He was universally admired for his upright character. No position of honour or emolument in the Government was beyond his reach. He was incorruptible and unyielding on principles. The *Swarajist*, C.S. Ranga Iyer, called him the Zaghlol Pasha of Indian politics. But for his differences with the Congress, he said, Jinnah 'would easily have been one of the three idols of the market place, the other two being Mahatama Gandhi and Pandit Motilal Nehru'. But Jinnah would prefer the role of an iconoclast to that of an idol, he added prophetically.[59]

The methods of direct action were repugnant to Jinnah's legal and constitutional temper. He dissociated himself from the Congress in 1920 and held aloof from politics for about three years. But his general attitude was practically unchanged and his pro-Congress disposition taken for granted. He spoke his customary language and would have British suzerainty tamed to India's purposes. He castigated Government diehardism and did not accept the bureaucratic argument blaming Congress non-co-operation for holding up the political progress of the whole country. For several years, he did not share Muslim disappointment with the Congress and was, therefore, not entirely popular with his own community. Orthodox Muslim politicians felt uncomfortable in his company. They distrusted his independence and his past. He was unacceptable to radicals because he was a moderate and a constitutionalist. But whether he was feared or suspected, he could neither be ignored nor bypassed. He was genuinely dedicated to the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity and was called the 'Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity'. A Hindu newspaper sarcastically wrote that Jinnah was never tired of singing the songs of unity. Jinnah was openly critical of his community's fondness for separate representation and told the annual session of the Muslim League in 1924:

> I am as much of a nationalist today as I ever was . . . . I am frankly opposed to separate electorates. I want the legislatures to be composed of the best elements in the country, but Muslims are not prepared to go as far as that . . . They will fight for *Swaraj*, but they demand some assurances in return. The communities do not oppose unity. Only a few warlike individuals do . . .
>
> Hindu-Muslim unity is the most vital condition of *Swaraj*. The two do not trust each other sufficiently. Foreign rule will last so long as this continues.[60]

But he treated Hindu-Muslim unity as a 'concrete proposition' and not a mere phrase. It could neither be achieved by homilies nor could

it be imposed on a troublesome and embittered minority by a powerful majority. He worked for a just and fair settlement. In the most trying circumstances, he exerted himself more than any of his contemporaries. If he did not succeed in composing communal differences, the fault lay elsewhere. By 1926, he had reached the conclusion that:

> . . . . . Congress point of view on the subject of Muslim position was far from reassuring. No responsible Congressman or Hindu leader had come forward with a concrete proposal with regard to the Muslim community. Individual pronouncements were, however, made by one person or another, nothing definite was forthcoming. There is no escaping away from the fact, communalism did exist in the country. By mere talk and sentiment it could not be removed. Nationalism could not be created by having a mixed electorate.[61]

In one of his articles, Gandhi listed the principles and policies of Fazl-i-Husain among the major causes of communal rift in the Punjab. A man of inflexible will, Fazl-i-Husain was trained for the law. His connection with the educational and civic life of the province began with the century. In 1916, he sought election to the provincial legislature from the university constituency. This was a mixed constituency in which Hindu and Muslim voters together elected their representative. During the electoral campaign, he met some thirty Hindu leaders of eminence for all of whom he entertained feelings of the highest regard. He found that only three of them were prepared to vote for him, the rest refused support saying, 'You are the best man, and we trust you will succeed, but we very much regret we are not free to give you our vote.' This experience brought him face to face with, what he called, 'the sad realities of political life for a Muslim in India'. He observed that:

> An Indian Muslim in the Punjab may be intensely national, sincerely non-communal, not only in thought but in action, in all his dealings, and none may point out a single incident to the contrary, and yet when the occasion arises the non-Muslim leaders and public would not prefer him especially if he happens to be capable and strong.[63]

This revealing incident taught him a lesson and he became a staunch upholder of the principle of separate representation.

Fazl-i-Husain held important offices both in the League and the Congress between the years 1915 and 1920. He came into conflict with Governor Michael O'Dwyer and refused to attend a recruiting rally if he was not permitted to speak in favour of popular demands. Like other moderate politicians, he severed his connection with the Congress in 1920. But he continued to profess loyalty to the Congress creed as he understood it. 'Once a Congressman, always a Congressman', he once said. In 1921, he was appointed the provincial Minister for education and local government. In this office, he organized a political party, called the Unionist party, which included both Hindus and Muslims. The Unionist recognition of the identity of economic interests

between the different communities inhabiting the province was balanced by an aggressive faith in separate elctorates. The party ruled the province for the next twenty-five years, with mostly unsatisfactory results, circumstances denying it unselfish leadership after 1925.

As a Minister, Fazl-i-Husain believed that the countryside was the pride and the peasantry the backbone, of the province. Therefore, he gave considerable thought and attention to the development of the hitherto neglected rural areas. The Hindu Press opened a vitriolic campaign against him for promoting cleavage between the rural (mostly Muslim) and urban (mostly Hindu) classes. Curiously enough, his critics denounced his action in extending the principle of separate electorates to District Board elections but desired to have the same principle extended to the election of village councils.[63] His executive order fixing the respective shares of various communities in administrative services was adduced as yet another instance of setting Muslims against Hindus. Fazl-i-Husain denied the authorship of the policy, which had been framed as far back as 1901, to prevent any one of the communities from monopolizing the public services.[64]

Charged with unfair treatment of the Hindu minority in the province, he agreed to submit his actions to the scrutiny of an arbiter. The Hindu leaders of the province prevailed upon Gandhi to act as the umpire. After examining both sides, Gandhi held the indictment to be unfounded.

How Fazl-i-Husain reacted to the Hindu-Muslim problem will be clear from the extracts from his personal papers reproduced in his biography. He believed that tolerance was absolutely essential in a country like India where 'races and religions, castes and faiths mingle together'. Unity was necessary, but it could not be created to order, it could only be achieved on a co-operative basis. Unity obtained by suppressing the weak would militate against the well-ordered development of nationalism in India. The minorities should be assured of religious and cultural autonomy. Contact with Islam revolutionized the Indian mind and Indian culture was a synthesis of both Hindu and Muslim cultures. Suitable safeguards would give the Muslim minority the necessary security and reassurance.[65]

A native of the city of Lahore, Mohammad Shafi went to England to study Law and was called to the Bar in 1892. He returned to India and soon attained a towering position in the profession. He was appointed Education Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council in 1919. His thoughts on the Indian situation are expressed in a book entitled *Some Important Indian Problems* written by him and published in 1930 from Lahore. He was fully conscious that world-shaking forces had initiated stupendous social changes. Life, no longer individual or national, was becoming international. No community could afford to lead an isolated existence. India could not stand alone and self-contained. The future lay with some such body as the League of Nations. The British Empire was itself a League in miniature. The attainment of Indian self-government within the Empire was, therefore, a worthy ideal.

As a politician, Mohammad Shafi was conservative and even re-

actionary. He valued the British connection and stood for ordered progress, dreading revolutionary forces which led no one knew where. He affirmed that a worthwhile scheme of democracy in India had to be broad-based. Constitutional progress on Western democratic lines, he held, was bound to concentrate power in the hands of the organized few. British rule in India was perforce unitary in character. But a unitary state was an impossibility in a self-governing India. The obvious way out was a united states of India. Federalism was the master key to the Indian problem.

Mohammad Shafi stoutly contested the much trumpeted Hindu *Mahasabha* theorems that separate electoral representation was opposed to the fundamentals of democracy and was alone responsible for recurring riots. He stressed that the success of territorial constituencies in Western countries was due to the homogeneity of community life. He traced communal tension to the rise of an irresponsible leadership which manipulated mass feeling but could not control the trouble it aroused; to the coming of reforms and prospects of further democratization which had given the two communities a peep into the uncertainties of the future; to the rise of *Shuddhi* and *Sanghtan*, and *Tabligh* and *Tanzim* which had been conceived in an aggressive spirit and had no honest religious zeal about them and finally to the uncontrolled and ill-directed activities of uncultured and almost illiterate ecclesiasts, both Hindu and Muslim, who had been brought out of their cloisters to ensure the success of non-co-operation and who now had taken to politics as a wholetime job instead of going back to their previous positions in society.[66]

In many ways, the political changes that came over Muslim India were reflected, or rather epitomized, in Mohammad Ali's public career. He participated in the Congress for the first time in 1919 and presided over its special session held at Coconada in 1923 where he read an extraordinarily long address surveying Muslim politics since the Mutiny. At that time, he described Gandhi as the most Christ-like man of our times', whose living reminded one of the Sermon on the Mount. But he soon developed the conviction that the Congress and the *Mahasabha* were, between them, leading the country to disaster. Mohammad Ali was a typical product of the period of confusion and transition, being sensitive to strong pulls from opposite directions. He was passionately devoted to the ideal of Indian independence. At the same time, he felt gravely perturbed over the future of the Muslims in a scheme of Indian self-government as conceived by the Hindu *Mahasabha*. He held that India had never been 'democratically' governed in the past and that majority rule in India could turn out to be the worst form of tyranny. Therefore, Western democracy could not be accepted without due caution. The Muslims, he wrote, had ruled over the country in one way or another for about one thousand years; there was hardly a community in India which did not harbour real or imaginary grievances against them and was not preparing to take revenge from the present generation of Muslims for what their forebears did or had left undone. The Congress was untrue to its own ideals and had allowed its platform to be used as a forum for anti-Muslim propaganda. Political pru-

dence, he said, forbade him from commenting on *Shuddhi* and *Sanghtan*. But he sharply disapproved of *Tabligh* and *Tanzim*, for no creed could make much impression by mere preaching, however lofty that preaching may be. Muslims had to live Islam: if they did so, the faith will have a strong appeal. Converts, after all, could not be won by dubious methods.

Being a journalist Mohammad Ali wrote of all his experiences. Though he was persistently dogged by ill-health in the last ten years of his life, his energy was volcanic. His reading of History, in which he graduated from Oxford, gave him a sense of perspective and even in the daily round of politics, he was seldom unmindful of the demands of the future. A deep consciousness of his dual role as the maker of History and the recorder of History will be found to pervade the greater part of his writings. Most of his speeches were autobiographical and his ego was most pronounced in his utterances. But when he sat down to write on events, the personal note was subdued, even when his own share in shaping them was prominent or even decisive. His writings occasionally suffer from unnecessary exuberance, lacking an economy of expression. But he is nowhere superficial. As a matter of habit, he introduced his subject at great length and often consumed the entire editorial space for the day in preliminary observations. It was also usual for him to stray away from his theme but his digressions served a useful purpose. They prevented important facts from being lost.

Mohammad Ali's judgement about contemporary personalities will be borne out by a dispassionate study of the circumstances of the times. He was convinced that Gandhi had allowed Hindu-Muslim relations to worsen through sheer inaction after 1925. He charged Motilal Nehru with 'denationalizing' the Congress by his blatant and unremitting efforts to placate the Hindu *Mahasabha*. Again, he blamed the Hindu leadership for adopting an indulgent attitude towards Hindu disturbers of peace and of sweeping condemnation towards Muslim rioters. The true function of a leader, he pleaded, was to put his own house in order, by keeping the temper of his own following under check and by refraining from hurling provocative accusations at others.

Mohammad Ali's major preoccupation in 1926 was a notable struggle for the resuscitation of the *Khilafat*. An opportunity presented itself in the heart of the Muslim world when Ibn Saud conquered the Hejaz in 1925. Upon this, Mohammad Ali and his associates of the Indian *Khilafat* Committee entered into a long correspondence with the Arab chief, urging him to summon a representative assembly from different Muslim countries to settle the question. Ibn Saud pretended to agree. The assembly that he got together—the Indian *Khilafatists* were duly invited to join—was carefully chosen. All independent elements were excluded. The Indian delegates found themselves in a helpless minority. Ibn Saud had his way and succeeded in getting his title confirmed to a hereditary kingdom. This was another cruel blow to Mohammad Ali whose dream of a strong *Khilafat* was shattered once more. A considerable portion of Mohammad Ali's writings deals with this episode. He was interested in the establishment of a republican form of government in the Hejaz, providing education for its people,

improved medical facilities for pilgrims, better lighting of the shrine and the raising of the living standards of the Beduins.

Ibn Saud's iconoclastic zeal manifested itself in the demolition of numerous sepulchres held sacred by Muslims regardless of denominational allegiance. This had its repercussions in India and divided the generality of Muslims into two warring camps of those who supported Ibn Saud and those who condemned his 'profanity'. The columns of Muslim newspapers in 1926 and 1927 were almost entirely full of pro- or anti-Saud writings. The storm subsided. But the whole affair illustrated the group behaviour of Indian Muslims and the nature of their interest in the outer world.

We have already seen that the *ulema* furnished the hard-core of the various nationalist Muslim groups. In due course, they federated with educated and prominent Muslims whose primary interest was in the affairs of the Muslim world. The combination became a force in Muslim politics for a while. The nature and dimensions of this force can be gauged from the following extract taken from Jawaharlal Nehru's *Autobiography*:

> There were many Muslims in the Congress. Their numbers were large, and included many able men, and the best known and most popular Muslim leaders in India were in it. Many of those Congress Muslims organized themselves into a group called the 'Nationalist Muslim Party, and they combated the communal Muslim leaders. They did so with some success to begin with, and a large part of the Muslim intelligentsia seemed to be with them. But they were all upper middle-class folk, and there were no dynamic personalities amongst them. They took to their professions and their business, and lost touch with the masses. Indeed, they never went to their masses. Their method was one of drawing-room meetings and mutual arrangements and pacts, and at this game their rivals, the communal leaders, were greater adepts. Slowly the latter drove the Nationalist Muslims from one position to another, made them give up, one by one, the principles by which they stood. Always the Nationalist Muslims tried to ward off further retreat and to consolidate their position by adopting the policy of 'lesser evil', but always this led to another retreat and another choice of the 'lesser evil'. There came a time when they had nothing left to call their own, no fundamental principle on which they stood except one, and that had been the very sheet-anchor of their group; joint electorates. But again the policy of the lesser evil presented the fatal choice to them, and they emerged from the ordeal minus that sheet-anchor. So today they stand divested of every shred of principle or practice on the basis of which they formed their group, and which they had proudly nailed to their mast-head—of everything, all except their name.[67]

This was the leadership which Nehru considered best for the Muslim community and on this his mind does not seem to have changed.

From this survey of parties and politicians the Government and Administration cannot be left out. The continual outbreaks of violence

thoroughly discredited the machinery of law and order. The impression gained ground that the government did not bother about what went on. The authorities often neglected elementary precautions and tolerated breaches of peace under their very nose. While the Government showed great ferocity in suppressing political and revolutionary crime and gave a short shrift to political agitators and 'disloyal' newspapers, its attitude towards rioters was notoriously colourless. Problems of the preservation of communal peace were left to the discretion of local functionaries who exercised their powers capriciously. Probably, the most sensible thing for a government would have been either to allow music before all mosques or to disallow it altogether, to allow cow slaughter under certain conditions at all places or to ban it everywhere. But the Government would not agree to be bound by a rule. It would decide every case on its own merit and without reference to similar situations existing in a dozen of adjacent localities. Its agents were guided either by local custom or by expediency. Each situation was assessed and interpreted by every 'responsible' official according to his own discretion which was often foggy. Sometimes local custom would override expediency, and sometimes expediency got the better of local custom, and this would often happen at the same place in successive seasons. Thus peace came to hang on the whims of individuals and the refusal on the part of the Government to discipline its discretionary power remained a perennial source of mischief.

4

THE year 1927 is a turning point in the annals of the sub-continent. The Congress was bereft of its former influence and its stock was rapidly falling. This compelled it to seek shelter behind Hindu nationalism. For all practical purposes, it became a branch of the Hindu *Mahasabha*. The Muslim community was seized with despair and a distrust of politicians. Its weak Press and ineffective leadership were divided against themselves. Some of their leaders looked for guidance from the Congress, others sought patronage from the alien Government. The language of Muslim newspapers and leaders was often reckless but that of the Hindu journals and leaders was much worse. Nehru's observations point to the same conclusion. He says, 'Muslim communal leaders said and did many things harmful to political and economic freedom, but as a group and individually they conducted themselves before the Government and the public with some dignity. That could hardly be said of Hindu communal leaders.'[68] Congress nationalism was a convenient cloak for the furtherance of Hindu objectives. Nehru's finding that the activities of the Hindu *Mahasabha* stimulated Muslim communalism is belied by facts. It is unfair to single out the *Mahasabha* as the villain of the piece for the Congress, predominantly Hindus, was equally blame-worthy.

Some writers averred that all hope for the future was not yet lost for Hindus and Muslims still worked together in Government offices, sat in committees and conferences and deliberated together in local bodies and legislatures. Co-operation in varied spheres of politics and adminis-

tration could be depended upon to engender a consciousness of common purpose and of common destiny. Dr A. Suhrawardy, who worked as a member of the Indian Central Committee appointed to collaborate witht he Indian Statutory Commission, formed his own judgement about the role of Muslims in this field of common effort. He wrote:

Though the precept and example of Surendranath Banerjea and Mr C.R. Das have left me wiser, in the innermost recesses of my mind I still perceive the sway of the pernicious influences and ideas imbibed by me as a student of the London School of Economics. But my conception of my duty as a member of the Committee does not permit me to make my own individual predilections appear as if they have the support of 'mass and influential opinion'. For there is no denying the fact that the 'mass and influential opinion' of Islam is the other way about. If we are to decide according to our prejudices and pre-conceived notions, well, I at any rate would rather not have been a member of the Committee. No Muslim need have been a member of Committee at all. For, being in the minority against a hostile majority, the submergence and defeat of peculiarly Muslim view on every question was a foregone conclusion. There is no wonder that a Muslim member is tempted to non-co-operate and decline to function.[69]

5

THE new political system of Dyarchy made a bad start. The introduction of democratic elements into the constitution did not lead to democratic practice. The forms of democracy like election addresses, canvassing and the ballot box were there. But the spirit of popular government was lacking. In the absence of well organized political parties the interplay of personal factors was incessant. Under these circumstances the prospects for the growth of parliamentary institutions were bleak. Seeing that Dyarchy did not fulfil its purposes and was virtually breaking down, in 1924, the Government appointed a committee, generally known as the Indian Reforms Committee, which collected a good deal of interesting and distressing evidence on Dyarchical operations. None of the witnesses examined had anything to record in its favour. The Committee was pointedly told that Ministers appointed under the constitution were generally wanting in calibre as well as rectitude. They held office without power. Their internal differences tended to transfer all real authority to the Governor. British civil servants were resentful of Indian control. In short, the structure was rickety and was held in position by artificial props. The finding of the Reforms Committee evoked long discussions condemning Dyarchy. The Government, however, decided that it had not yet received an adequately long and fair trial to merit a harsh verdict. Meanwhile, the working of the reforms had clarified Muslim ideas about the direction of constitutional development. A federal constitution vesting residuary powers in the units, reforms in the North-West Frontier Province, separation of Sind from Bombay and statutory Muslim majorities in the Punjab and Bengal were the latest nostrums. There was some difference of opinion on the

question whether the electorates should be joint or separate. While a large volume of opinion stood for separate representation, a vocal section was prepared for a compromise. A brief explanation of each one of these propositions follows.

Federalism. The Muslims began to enter the sub-continent in the eighth century A.D. The Arabs and Turks were the first to settle down. The Persians and Afghans came next. But by far the larger number of Indian Muslims was descended from Hindu converts. As time went by, Indian Muslims, whether of foreign origin or of local descent, became one large group constituting about one fourth of the population of India. But this group was not evenly spread all over the country. Two-thirds of it lived in the North-Western and North-Eastern zones of India, which included the provinces of the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan in the west, and Bengal and parts of Assam in the east. The position of Sind was anomalous. It was a vast desert area whose Muslim majority was unfairly yoked to the predominantly Hindu province of Bombay. This peculiar distribution of population did not at once suggest secession. That idea came slowly. The community would have welcomed Hindu willingness to organize the India of the future as an association of autonomous provinces. But the Congress as well as the Mahasabha spurned the offer and the opportunity.

Reforms in the North-West Frontier Province. Viceroy Curzon, the author of the Bengal partition of 1905, carried out yet another partition which passed almost unnoticed. He joined the five trans-Indus districts of the Punjab with the Tribal territory to form a new province to be called the North-West Frontier Province, and placed it under a primitive system of administration. It was subjected to an inhuman penal code. The rule of law was suspended and normal judicial procedures ceased to apply. The benefits of the reforms of 1909 and 1919 were withheld from this Province, so that it was deprived of representative institutions of any kind. In 1921, the Government had an inquiry conducted into the advisability of giving the Montagu constitution to the province. The Committee reported favourably but the decision was postponed. Sir Denis Bray, the Chairman of this Committee, when appointed Governor of the North-West Frontier Province, declared himself against reforms on the ground that they would hurt the Hindu minority. The Muslim leadership raised the issue in the central legislature in 1926. The *Swarajists* adopted a complicated attitude. They offered to support the demand for full provincial autonomy provided the province agreed to a remerger with the Punjab. Their creed, they explained, forbade them from making a demand for dyarchy. This was subtle face-saving. The party men, who took part in the debate argued that the province was a deficit area incapable of supporting a government of its own, that it was low in literacy and culture, that its inhabitants had little respect for human life and that requirements of defence indicated a 'strong', that is to say, undemocratic government. All were agreed that it should continue to remain a refuge of autocracy. Two Muslim *Swarajists* earned expulsion from the party for their refusal to follow the party ukase. Mohammad Ali, who wrote copiously on the

subject, pointed out the crux of the matter when he complained that Hindus did not desire to live as a minority anywhere, not even in the North-West Frontier Province . . . . . They cry hoarse in bidding Muslims to live as a minority in the country and dispel the fear of Hindu majority . . . . . They are out to deny to Muslims the very safeguards that they demand for themselves.'[70]

Separation of Sind from Bombay. Sind was conquered by British arms in 1843 and was joined with Maharashtra and Gujrat to form the province of Bombay. The combination was an accident of history. Had the conquest of Sind followed and not preceded the subjugation of the Punjab in 1849, it would have been placed under the control of the neighbouring Punjab for purely geographical reasons. Under this arrangement, Sind like the eastern districts of Bengal, was neglected and forsaken. Physically, it was isolated from Bombay by a thousand miles of desert and had nothing in common with Gujrat and Maharashtra. Its only line of communication with the capital was the Arabian sea. Sind affairs attracted little attention at the centre of government. Her resources remained under-developed and communications neglected. Her interior was practically inaccessible. Sind Hindus themselves asked for separation in 1915. But when the same demand came from Muslims it was opposed on economic grounds which could not conceal the Hindu anxiety at having to live as a political minority under a representative system.

Statutory Muslim majorities in the Punjab and Bengal. The Muslims having token majorities, fifty-six and fifty-four per cent respectively, in the two important provinces of the Punjab and Bengal, pressed for a fifty-one per cent representation in the provincial legislatures to be fixed by statute. Probably the demand was not extravagant and if conceded would not have established, as the Hindus proclaimed, Muslim rule in the two provinces. But Hindus resisted both separate representation and statutory majorities as contrary to the democratic principle. The actual reason has been explained by Sir Reginald Craddock:

> Homogeneous people are willing to be governed by majorities, provided that majorities have sufficient sense to govern at all. Heterogeneous people are not willing to be governed by such majorities, unless their own section is in a majority over the rest, or, *if not in a numerical majority, has some other extraordinary advantage which they feel sure will give it full control over others.*[71]

The principle is unimpeachable. In view of the general Muslim backwardness the in Punjab and Bengal, non-Muslims enjoyed all the advantages and opportunities which gave them 'full control over others.'

Separate Electorates. The Hindu *Mahasabha* declared against separate representation in 1924 and two years later, began a clamorous agitation to have it rescinded. The sheer volume of the noise made the Muslim leaders uneasy because they did not expect the Government

to withstand the pressure. Their anxiety was so great that the Viceroy had to issue a reassuring statement. In March 1927, a Hindu legislator tabled a resolution in the upper chamber for the abolition of separate electorates. No such resolution was brought before the lower house. In the meantime, the torrent of abuse swelled and the Hindu Mahasabha organized its forces for a show-down. It will be remembered that Lord Olivier, the India Secretary in the first Labour government, had privately communicated his disapprobation of communal representation to Mr Satyamurthi, a prominent Madras *Swarajist*. The propriety of his action was questioned both by the Muslims in India and by his political adversaries in Britain. After he left office, he thought it necessary to restate his ideas and reassert his position. In the course of two articles written for the *Contemporary Review* of April and May 1925, he stated dogmatically that nationalism was the only force capable of fighting dissidence in India, that political representation could be based on secular interests alone and that true democracy could only be founded on the principle of equal citizenship and not on a scheme of communal representation. In the same journal for May 1928, he wrote that the system of communal representation was a disastrous experiment, 'bound to be fatal to the satisfactory working of any constitution that embodied it.' The thesis was at once appropriated by the Congress as well as the Hindu *Mahasabha*. Both were agreeably surprised to find that Hindu communal interests were in perfect unison with the democratic theory as expounded by this Labour intellectual. With the advent of the second Labour government in 1929, its friends in India circulated unauthorized reports of its plans and policies. They predicted immediate suspension of separate electorates, causing considerable commotion in Muslim circles. In spite of the Viceroy's assurance to the contrary, past experience of promises held out by British statesmen and administrators did not give ground for optimism.

The Hindus argued that separate electorates were opposed to the teaching of history, that they perpetuated class divisions providing immediate provocation for bloodshed. The historical argument was fallacious, for a review of the past showed that the situation in India was unique and that the system of government established here by Britain was without parallel. Cast in the 'adamantine mould of immemorial custom going back to thousands of years', class divisions of Indian society were sanctified by religion. An election every three or five years which touched no more than the barest fringe of the vast population of India could not be justly made responsible for the ancient caste tensions. The connection between separate electorates and Hindu-Muslim riots was far-fetched. The intolerant group consciousness of the day was a legacy of the past. Riots had occurred even before the Reforms and the introduction of separate electorates. Theoretical considerations apart, Muslim prejudice against joint electorates was founded on practical experience, limited though that experience was. Under the Minto-Morley Reforms, Muslims had the right of contesting a few seats in a general electorate which they gave up under the Lucknow Pact. The only common constituencies that remained were

those of Labour, Landlords, Universities and Commerce. In practice this did not mean much. No general constituency with a Muslim minority ever returned a Muslim except in the rarest of instances. A larger number of mixed constitutencies should have supplied the much-needed laboratory for testing the validity of arguments used in the electoral controversy and affording the Muslims an opportunity of ascertaining by experience whether or not they could safely dispense with separate representation. But the election results in isolated mixed constituencies conclusively proved Muslim helplessness in joint electorates. No Muslim offered himself for election to the Calcutta corporation in 1921; the majority of Hindu constituents of the Punjab University, who were called upon to elect ten fellows out of their own number every year, never elected a single Muslim between 1904 and 1946. The election to the Central Legislative Assembly from the mixed constituency of the city of Delhi in 1927, where Asaf Ali, a Muslim Congressman of long standing and proven loyalty was worsted by an untried and nondescript Hindu candidate sponsored by the Hindu Mahasabha and quietly accepted by Motilal Nehru, was long afterwards quoted as a classical instance of the stranglehold of joint electorates. On the contrary, separate electorates had never prevented Congressite Muslims from making their way in purely Muslim constituencies. It is not insignificant that the twenty faithful Muslim followers of C.R.Das in the Bengal legislature had been all elected on the basis of separate representation. Several Hindu politicians who applied themselves to the problem seriously, did not subscribe to the popular Hindu view. Surendranath Banerjea, for instance, said that it was 'dangerous, unwise, inexpedient and impolitic' to force joint electorates on Muslims in the teeth of their opposition and himself incorporated the principle of separate representation in the Calcutta Corporation Act of 1921. The same realization was reflected in Das' pact with the *Khilafatists*. C.Y. Chintamani, a Hindu journalist, politician and one-time Minister to the Government of the United Province, admitted before the Reforms Inquiry Committee that friction between Hindus and Muslims in his province had visibly abated after the grant of separate electorates to the Muslims in District Board elections. But it was argued that even if all this were admitted, the objection still remained that electoral separatism encourages narrow and sectional politics. The voters as well as candidates think and act as members of communities and not as citizens of the commonwealth. The candidates vie with one another in advocating extreme and irreconcilable demands as vote-catching devices. This difficulty is real but by no means fundamental. Separate representation was the outcome of communal differences and not their origin. The problem was essentially one of mutual trust. Separate electorates should have been unnecessary in an atmosphere of confidence and cordiality.

The account of this controversy may be closed with a description of the results of a large-scale experiment in joint electorates in a contemporary European democracy inhabited by mixed nationalities. In the *Contemporary Review* for June 1931 we read that:

Polish Upper Silesia is inhabited by a mixed population of which approximately two-thirds are Poles and one-third Germans. In this area the system of joint or mixed electorate, such as the Congress demanded for India, has been established. At the end of last summer the Polish parliament and Silesian Sejm were dissolved and fresh elections announced. The feeling between Poles and Germans at the time ran high and the Polish nationalists entered the electoral contest with the declared object of wiping out German representation; in Upper Silesia they organized an anti-German week . . . and they gave the wildest publicity to this feature of their electoral campaign both in the Press and by posters affixed in public places. A violently nationalist organization, the Association of Polish Insurgents, proclaimed that the object of the election was the annihilation of the German minority and organized a systematic campaign of violence and intimidation to prevent any votes being given for German candidates. There was no ambiguity about the consequences that might be expected by those who ventured to disobey the orders of the Polish Insurgents. An election poster . . . contained these words, 'Nobody is allowed to vote for the German list. Whoever votes for the German list becomes a traitor for the Silesian people and will be exposed to diagreeable consequences.' Threatening letters were printed and circulated, one of them ending with these words 'We add that we should be compelled to take the severest measures against you if you should record your vote for the German list.' During the elections many acts of violence and brutality were perpetrated against the defenceless minority . . . (in) as many as 255 cases in which assaults and outrages were committed against individuals to prevent them voting for German candidates. The violent and illegal tactics had the result intended; the outcome of elections was a heavy reduction in the number of German representatives. But the feud between the two peoples is more bitter than before.

The Indian elections of the twenties could not have presented a very different picture if they had been fought in mixed districts. Nevertheless, the Hindu thunder compelled a section of Muslim politicians to consider the situation afresh and seek some sort of adjustment with the other community. Meeting in the Western Hotel, Delhi, on 20 March 1927, some thirty of them, Jinnah and Mohammad Ali included, debated over the five alternative suggestions received from the Congress president. After a full discussion, they agreed to recommend the adoption of joint electorates by Muslims in return for statutory Muslim majorities in the Punjab and Bengal legislatures, separation of Sind from Bombay, reforms in the North-West Frontier Province, and a one-third Muslim representation in the central legislature. In provincial legislatures each community was to be assigned seats strictly proportionate to its population in the province. The old device of 'weightage' was dropped, for excess representation had failed to do any good anywhere. The scheme, which was meant to replace the Lucknow Pact and which came to be known as the Delhi proposals, was attributed to Jinnah. But it had actually emanated from the fertile

brain of Mr Kelkar, who expounded it in the course of his presidential address to the Hindu Mahasabha in 1925 in the following terms:

> The only position which the Hindus have taken and which, I think they should never give up is that Muslims cannot be allowed to claim special representation in different provinces according to a special rule for each province. In other words they do not object to a rule of universal application which Muslims may choose to abide by. But they object and will object to *ad hoc* pleas and rules, so that Muslims may be enabled to say 'heads I win tails you lose.' The application of any one universal rule would result naturally in hostages being given by both communities in different provinces. In the Frontier province, the Punjab, Bengal and Sind Muslims would be in a position of advantage. On the other hand, Hindus would be in a position of advantage in other provinces. Does this not give a kind of automatic guarantee against the ill-treatment of any one community by another in any province, assuming that Hindu and Muslim communities are both animated by fellow-feeling for (their?) co-religionists[72]

To talk of 'hostages being given' was to presuppose the existence of two armies facing one another and poised for attack. In its logical form, the plan advocated by the Hindu *Mahasabha* chief was, indeed, dreadful. It was a system of protection in which terror was to be met by terror and tyranny by tyranny. It involved the maintenance of peace by retaliation and provided for the punishment of an innocent minority for the sins of its co-religionists in other provinces. Whether these considerations were present in the minds of the authors of Delhi proposals or not—perhaps they weighed with some—they did arrive at a 'rule of universal application'. But by the time this rule found articulate expression, the Hindu *Mahasabha* leaders had shifted ground. While welcoming the renunciation of separate representation, they were reticent over the remaining proposals. The general Hindu feeling was expressed thus by the *Hindustan Times:*

> In what way is the establishment of joint electorates connected with the separation of Sind, and the introduction of Reforms in North-West Frontier Province .... ? Muslims feel that in conceding to Hindus the principle of joint electorate they are entitled to expect as a price of this concession more power in Sind ..... and North-West Frontier Province where they constitute an immense majority. .... The object Muslims have in view is to obtain as much as they can without conceding as little as possible.[73]

A cross section of Muslims dissentients, headed by Mohammad Shafi, came out with the comment 'If the majority community desires to send a few ignorant, mean, contemptible and thoroughly un-Muslim candidates as representatives of our community it can easily do it, as our minority votes will be swamped by the majority vote of the other community.'

For once Jinnah found himself in a quandary. He had to satisfy his own community with the equity of the proposals. At the same time, he had to convince the Hindus that separate electorates had not been surrendered unconditionally. He publicly stated that the offer had been made without heat or passion and that it was to be treated as an integral whole. That is to say, it could neither be accepted nor rejected in parts. The end in view, he continued:

> is that Muslims should be made to feel that they are secure and safeguarded against any act of oppression on the part of the majority, and that they need not fear that during the tansitional stage towards the fullest development of national government the majority would be in a position to oppress or tyrannize the minority, as majorities are prone to do in other countries.
>
> It must be recognized that under the circumstances and prevailing conditions it is essential that the political equipoise must be maintained. It is to maintain this balance that Muslims have taken a simple and juster method with the reciprocity clause . . . . . I am personally not wedded to separate electorates, although I must say that the overwhelming majority of Muslims firmly and honestly believe that this is the only method by which they can be secure.
>
> . . . . . the real issue is how to give a real sense of confidence and security to the minorities.[75]

Is it likely that the Delhi proposals, or any of their near variants, might have closed, ultimately, an unhappy chapter in history? No one can tell. Other factors came in. The Congress started by endorsing them and ended, within six months by wrecking them and destroying thereby the last chance of an agreement. Its acceptance was embodied in two different resolutions passed in May 1927 and December 1927. This encouraged the Muslim League to appoint a small committee to get in touch with the Congress nominees. An All-Parties Conference was summoned next. It met at Delhi on 11 February 1928. But this takes us far ahead of the narrative.

The appointment of a Royal Commission on constitutional reform was announced in November 1927. Royal Commissions, regarded as the most convenient means of shelving troublesome questions, were never trusted in India. Their labours were generally wasted. The dusty volumes of evidence and the expert reports were consigned to oblivion as soon as they came out of the press. There was a well-established precedent of putting some Indians on every Royal Commission. A few days prior to the announcement, on 1 November 1927, *The Times* wrote editorially that it was inconceivable for the forthcoming Commission not to include Indians among its membership. C.S. Ranga Iyer has stated that in the preceding summer, V.J. Patel, the Speaker of the Indian Legislative Assembly and a leading Congressite, had travelled all the way to Britain to tell the Prime Minister that Gandhi's appointment on the commission would ensure Congress collaboration and goodwill. But the British Government declined to be instructed. Fortified with the consent of opposition parties, it pro-

ceeded to appoint a Commission of seven Britons, all members of Parliament. The exclusion of Indians was an affront to precedent and to sentiment and created a veritable storm. The boycott slogan was raised and political parties began to prepare for hostile demonstrations against the commissioners. The Viceregal statement rationalizing the discrimination was received derisively. It was generally assumed that the commissioners had been coached over the kind of report expected of them. The ingenious efforts of the lawyer chairman of the Commission, Sir John Simon, to wangle Indian co-operation, met with no more than indifferent success. For a time, almost every sector of Indian opinion was ranged against the Commission. After a lapse of almost exactly thirty years, the late Viceroy Lord Irwin (later the Earl of Halifax) disclosed in his autobiography *Fulness of Days* that the Government decision to leave out Indians was taken to ward off the complications arising out of a Hindu-Labour partnership on a mixed commission and its consequent repercussions. He says,

> One of the dangers that the Secretary of State foresaw from a mixed Commission was that, on a basis of language not precisely defined, an unreal alliance might be created between the Indian (Hindu, to be sure) and the British Labour representatives . . . . . And for political reasons of their own, the Labour representatives might not be unwilling, on the same platform of generalities, to subsrcibe to the case so put forward.[76]

The controversy about the desirability of working with an 'all-White' Commission split the Muslim League in two. One section of it, led by Mohammad Shafi, was friendly to the Commission; the other, led by Jinnah, advocated a boycott. Both defined their positions and defended their procedures at separate meetings held at Lahore and Calcutta. The Calcutta group adopted the Delhi proposals, while the Lahore section pulled them to pieces.

6

THE end of 1927 was marked by turmoil and gloom. There was labour discontent in Bengal and an agrarian unrest in the North and North-West of the country. A terrorist and revolutionary Hindu youth movement began in the Punjab. A small but aggressive socialist circle was organized within the Congress. Hindu-Muslim relations had worsened. Riots spread at the slightest provocation, consuming whatever was left of security and orderliness. The Government had lost control. It could do little except make ineffective appeals for 'sanity'. Of the political leaders the two Nehrus, father and son, were out of the country. Gandhi was not willing to move out of his cell. Mohammad Ali, a lonesome and tragic figure, was worn out, disillusioned and prematurely old. The Congress president, Sirinivasa Iyenger, a man of conscience and determination, solicited League support in his mission of peace. His long tours in the country and eloquent appeals brought together a largely attended unity conference where a political accord was reach-

ed between the Hindus and Muslims on the basis of the Delhi proposals. Intervening in an India debate in the House of Lords, about the same time, the India Secretary, Birkenhead, asserted with his characteristic banter that India's inter-communal wrangles were eternal and discussions about them futile. His ironical comments on the inability of Indian leaders to agree among themselves were seized upon by the Congress as a challenge which had to be boldly faced and manfully answered.

The deliberations of the leftist-oriented Madras Congress of December 1927 were marked by several interesting features. Gandhi attended after a period of absence. Jawaharlal Nehru announced his conversion to Socialism on return from Soviet Russia. The political goal of *Swaraj* was changed to that of 'complete independence'. The Delhi proposals were accepted as a 'compromise' and the executive was directed to convene an all-parties conference to draw up a draft constitution in consultation with other parties. Jawaharlal Nehru, one of the three secretaries of the Congress, felt unhappy at the prospect of having to plod with moderate groups.[77] Similarly, Subhas Chandra Bose discovered after the event that it was foolish to have looked to others for constitution making, for the Congress alone was qualified to produce the draft. The word 'compromise' had already disappeared from the Congress lexicon.

Invitations were sent to various political organizations. Those who responded met at Delhi, the Jinnah group of the League among them. The conference sat for a whole month. It was practically controlled by the Hindu Mahasabha. The League withdrew. Parleys dragged on, and on 11 March the Conference adjourned without achieving anything. It reassembled at Bombay in May 1928. This time Motilal Nehru struck a new note. He joined hands with the Mahasabha and unceremoniously quashed the recent Congress acceptance of the Delhi proposals. The deck cleared, a small committee of jurists, with Motilal Nehru as chairman, was named to study the problem and draft a constitution. The committee worked daily for long hours at Allahabad and concluded its labours in less than three months. Its memorandum, popularly called the Nehru Report, was drawn up in polished English. The larger part of it was indited by Motilal himself. One of the two Muslim members of his committee, Sir Ali Imam, was absent throghout but affixed his signature to the draft all the same.

The Report proposed Dominion Status for the country with a parliamentary form of government, it vested residuary powers in the centre and conferred 'autonomy' on provinces to be linguistically reconstituted. The far-reaching powers of interefernce allowed to the centre reduced the autonomy of provinces to a farce. It agreed to the Muslim demands for the separation of Sind from Bombay and the raising of the North-West Frontier Province to the status of other provinces. It substituted adult and universal franchise for separate representation and fixed communal quotas for legislatures of provinces with negligible Muslim minorities and for the North-West Frontier Province with an overwhelming Muslim preponderance. It ruled out reservation of seats for the Punjab and Bengal. These provinces were

intended to become, so to speak, an open electoral field. The Congress-League formula of 1916 providing for a veto on measures discountenanced by a two-third membership of either community, was scrapped. The committee proposed the insertion into the constitution of a comprehensive, if somewhat high-sounding Bill of Rights.

It has been said that the Nehru Report disposed of its aims by idealizing them, its difficulties by talking round them and facts by ignoring them. Casting aside whatever measure of agreement had been achieved, it moved into an uncharted region. Motilal Nehru's repudiation of the Delhi proposals was unwise and inexpedient. It was a violation of faith besides. While the distribution of seats between different communities in Hindu majority provinces was to be determined by their respective population ratios, the Muslim position in the Punjab and Bengal was weakened by the devices of non-reservation and joint electorates. Subhas Chandra Bose, a member of the Nehru committee, justifies this plan on several counts. In the first place, he states that Hindus, who constituted a minority in these provinces, were opposed to the system of reservations and it seemed unfair to reserve seats for the majority. Secondly, the extravagant Sikh claims could not be fitted into any plan of apportionment. Thirdly, the existing representation derived from the Lucknow Pact was no longer acceptable to Muslims. And finally, the most compelling reason of all was the impossibility of arriving at a proportion on which parties could be brought round to agree. Therefore, the committee could pursue the matter no further.[78] The non-Muslim minorities in the Punjab and Bengal would not experience the same threat from the weight of numbers as Muslim minorities in other provinces. The Punjab was, indeed, a volcanic spot. The absence of reservations here and in Bengal would have turned both of these provinces into cockpits of strife where rival parties would be perpetually measuring their strength. It is very likely that, in part at least, this light and wisdom came from the Hindu *Mahasabha*. A moderately sized volume entitled *The Rights claimed by the Hindu minority in North-West India*, compiled by the president of the Punjab branch of this organization, was published from Lahore in 1928. It was evidently meant for the consumption of Nehru and his committee men. The author unobtrusively propounded the doctrine that the essence of democracy lies in the right of the majority to dictate to the minority, but he inverted this principle in its application to the Punjab, where the question of separate versus joint electorates was to be settled by the minorities themselves. But even if the wishes of the minorities were fully conceded, there might still be a remote possibility of the Muslims gaining a majority under a joint electorate without reservations. To meet this eventuality, the writer pleaded for the retention of the existing representation of communities, as instituted by the Pact of 1916, in which Muslims could at the most achieve parity with all the other communities put together.

By ignoring the Muslims the Nehru Report became the charter of the Hindu intelligentsia. The motives underlying its recommendations have been set forth by C.S. Ranga Iyer:

> To avoid *Swarajists* being 'dished' at the next general elections their leader surrendered the Congress programme and abandoned the old nationalist policy which believed in healthy compromises with Muslims with a view to creating confidence in an important minority, without which all national endeavours must end in fiasco. The spirit which animated the old Congress and gave India what was known as the Lucknow pact was banished from the Congress owing to the lack of faith and lack of courage of its leader who could not forget the heavy casualties of the 1926 elections. A constitutional scheme of reforms (i.e. the Nehru Report) which was acceptable to the Hindu *Mahasabha* was produced by the Congress leader with the help of Liberals to the disgust of Muslims . . . . . who openly rebelled against it. The incident shows that organized communalism can confuse and overwhelm professing nationalism.[79]

And again:

> The Nehru Report not only repudiated the Muslim claims, but also the Hindu-Muslim pact of C.R. Das. It was becoming clear that the power of the electorate was being felt by the leaders. Its communalism became contagious. The Congress became tainted with communalism because it believed in council entry . . . . .[80]

Jawaharlal Nehru who has an unusual knack of skipping over hard realities with the help of nonchalant vagueness supported this very view when he recorded: '. . . . . elections are extraordinary phenomena. They have a curious way of upsetting tempers and ordinary standards.[81]

The Report received wide publicity and was discussed at conventions, conferences and rallies. Subhas Chandra Bose declared exultantly that it had done all that the Royal Commission was expected to do and that there was nothing left for the Commission except to go through the Report and write ditto at the end. Motilal Nehru treated it as his very child, viewed every comment from a purely personal angle and set his heart on having it adopted without argument or alteration. Gandhi, who might have exercised greater restraint, publicly eulogized the achievement and wired his warmest congratulations to Motilal Nehru. The Muslims felt that they had been cheated of their legitimate rights and delivered to the Leviathan of the majority. All this was bad enough. What followed was worse. The two leading Muslims, Jinnah and Mohammad Ali, who could have effectively organized the community's opinion were absent from the country. The Congress was in a hurry to have the Report ratified. The draft was placed before the plenary session of the All-Parties Conference in Lucknow in August 1928, neither wing of the Muslim League joining. Some representatives of the Khilafat Committee murmured dissent but their aquiescence was secured by vague promises of a later and lengthier consideration.[82] This inconclusive approval of the All-Parties Conference, which was representative only in name, was taken to have conferred upon the Report the character of a 'national demand', and was soon made into a sharp-edged weapon of publicity.

When Jinnah arrived in India, he was taken aback by what had happened. He was cautious and disinclined to use the language of condemnation, though his reaction was unambiguous. He refused to accept the Nehru Report and the decisions of the Lucknow Conference as final. A few days later, Mohammad Ali was back in the country. He felt exasperated to see that the Nehru Committee had relegated the Delhi proposals, in shaping which he had played his part, to the dustbin, and with it went the basis of a settlement. He reprimanded Motilal Nehru for nullifying not only the Delhi proposals but also the resolutions of the Madras Congress. He charged Gandhi with inconsistency and with abandoning the Muslims. In 1925 Gandhi had spotlighted the futility of entering into pacts in an atmosphere of suspicion. He had now chosen to bless an inopportune and controversial contract like the Nehru Report while tempers still ran high, worsening Hindu-Muslim relations. The executive committee of the 'Jinnah League', as it was called, was invited to attend the second session of the All-Parties Conference scheduled for the last week of December. There was some hesitation, but ultimately a contigent of twenty-three delegats was named to join discussions and ask for the amendment of the Nehru Report to bring it in harmony with the Delhi proposals. A similar mandate was given to Mohammad Ali by the *Khilafat* Committee. The All-Parties Conference met in Calcutta. When Motilal Nehru arrived he was met by a large procession composed of the voluntary cavalry, infantry and artillery and several religious and political societies; in the meetings of the Conference he was surrounded by volunteer guards.

The Conference began amidst tension. The chairman, the nationalist Muslim, Dr M.A. Ansari, began by praising the Nehru scheme as a great opportunity for welding together Indian humanity groaning under the double misery of foreign domination and internal dissensions. Gandhi was given a royal ovation as he entered the Conference. He sat attentive and silent but took no part in the proceedings. The Hindu Mahasabha representatives took up an attitude which amounted to an ultimatum. They threatened to walk out if the Nehru Report was altered even by a comma. The Sikhs had been tutored in advance to oppose whatever the Muslims proposed. The Congress leaders were in the clutches of the Hindu Mahasabha. The verdict of the Conference was no longer in doubt. When Mohammad Ali, M.C. Chagla and Jinnah rose to move their amendments, they were presenting a case which had been already lost in that forum. Jinnah implored the Conference to effect an adjustment enabling the peoples of India to live in amity and friendship. He warned against the dangers of a constitution under which minorities felt insecure. Sir T.B. Sapru, one of the signatories to the Report, replied in invective and called him a 'spoiled child'. A Hindu Mahasabhite questioned Jinnah's credentials to speak for the Muslims. 'Jinnah represents nobody', he shouted.[83] The Nehru constitution was voted exactly as the Hindu Mahasabha had desired. Jinnah felt wounded and shattered. 'Never generous with his tears', says one of his friends, he cried out in anguish that the 'parting of ways' had come.[84] While Jinnah left for Bombay,

other Muslim leaders who were disgusted with the All-Parties Conference repaired to Delhi to take their places in the recently convened federation of the various Muslim parties under the presidency of the Aga Khan. The Muslim Congressites had been deeply shocked. Mohammad Ali, who had pleaded with his community two years earlier to stay in the Congress at all costs, was compelled to sever his connection. The result is thus described by C.S. Ranga Iyer:

> The Muslims in the Congress dwindled from a few hundred to less than a score of members . . . . The parties and their leaders could not afford to take up a purely nationalistic attitude. This is true alike of Hindus and Muslims.[85]

Subhas Chandra Bose admits that Muslim opposition undermined the value of the Nehru Report. If it was intended to meet the Birkenhead challenge, it failed because the challenge was for an agreed constitution. Motilal Nehru was rewarded with the presidency of the Congress which met at Calcutta two days after the All-Parties Convention had dispersed and which his Report dominated. Gandhi personally sponsored a resolution by which the British Government was asked to accept and implement the Nehru constitution in its entirety on or before 31 December 1929, failing which the Congress would be free to resort to a campaign of civil disobedience.

In the floodgates of the public controversy that were now opened M.C. Chagla,[86] who had prevailed upon the Muslim League to nominate a delegation to the All-Parties Conference, was the first to speak. He said that if the Convention could not negotiate a settlement with the twenty-three representatives of the League, who had come as supplicants and not as obstuctionists, it could not do so with a single Muslim in the whole of India.[87] Mohammad Ali deplored Gandhi's fervent canvassing of the Report. He quoted from Gandhi's writings of 1924 and 1925 to show that the Mahatama was now converted to a different creed and was striving for different goals. He wrote to this effect:

> Gandhi has defeated all Muslim attempts for a compromise. He wants to kill communalism by ignoring it. He is giving free reins to the communalism of the majority. (The Nehru constitution) is the legalized tyranny of numbers and is the way to rift and not peace. It recognizes the rank communalism of the majority as nationalism. The safeguards proposed to limit the high-handedness of the majority are branded as communal.[88]

> By an over-zealous advocacy of the Nehru Report, Gandhi has written off numerous undertakings of the Congress and much of his own writing.[1]

Jawaharlal Nehru's observation that: It was a great misfortune that he (i.e. Mohammad Ali) left the country for Europe in the summer of 1928. A great effort was made to solve the communal problem, and it came very near success. If Mohammad Ali had been there

then, it is just conceivable that matters should have shaped differently'[89] is incomprehensible. How Mohammad Ali's presence in the country should have turned him into a protagonist of the Nehru Report is not clear.

Early in the next year the Congress initiated a vigorous propaganda in favour of the Nehru Report. Mohammad Ali issued a press statement forbidding Muslims from swelling Congress gatherings. Jawaharlal Nehru censured this former president for waging a war on the Congress. In a sharp rejoinder Mohammad Ali rebuked Jawaharlal Nehru for a short memory. The former Congress presidents, he said, had often flouted the clearest Congress injunctions in the past. Madan Mohan Malaviya defied the Congress over non-co-operation and led the electoral rebellion of 1926; Motilal faught on the issue of council entry and ignored the Congress mandate on the Delhi proposals; he asserted that like all ex-presidents, he was within his rights in fighting Congress resolutions and urging their revision.

The controversy dragged on with neither side having anything new to add. From now onwards 'the Congress entrenched itself as a narrow sectional organization unable to make a unified appeal'. That it continued to make aggressive claims about its 'national' character made little difference. The cleavage was irrevocable. Reviewing the Indian situation during 1926-31 in his book, *Years of Destiny*, Mr Coatman, who had observed this development at close quarters, wrote:

> From 1928 onwards there is quite definitely a new model of Hindu-Muslim antagonism which shows itself in organized political action for political ends. It is something deeper, more enduring, more embracing in its objectives than the old traditional, semi-instinctive antagonism which vented itself in street-fighting and stone-throwing . . . . on the days of religious festivals . . . . .[90]
>
> The position reached by the early days of 1929 in Hindu-Muslim relations . . . . . may lead to the literal disruption of India . . . . .
>
> The gulf dividing them is so deep that no reunion will ever be possible.
>
> . . . . . it seems that there may be brought into being a powerful Muslim state in the North and North-West, with its eyes turned away from India.[91]

Days and months passed. The Government made no response to the Congress ultimatum. In the summer of 1929, Viceroy, Irwin, proceeded to England for consultations and stated on return that 'responsible' government promised in Montagu's declaration of 1917 *would* naturally culminate in Dominion Status. But the span between the existing constitution and the ultimate destination could not be covered in one stride. The progress, he said, will have to be slow and measured. It was one thing to say, as the Government said, that India would achieve Dominion Status at some indeterminate date in the future and quite another to grant Dominion Status straightaway as the Congress demanded. The pronouncement did not fulfil Nehruite expectations. The threat of civil resistance held out in the event of the

Government not accepting the Nehru constitution within a year was now to be carried out. Consequently, when the Congress met at Lahore in December 1929, it was pledged to a forward move. The result was the Congress declaration of independence. Some passages of the 'independence resolution', as it was called, were addressed to the Muslims, Sikhs and other minorities, promising full satisfaction in such matters as language, culture, script and personal law. No specific policy was laid on the communal question as 'such questions could only be solved on 'national lines'. The phrase 'national lines' had a well-understood connotation. It was again and again proclaimed from the Congress platform that the Nehru Report had been buried. That may have been technically true. The spirit of the Report was very much alive.

The promised civil resistance was started by Gandhi, in March 1930, by breaking the laws relating to the Government monopoly of salt manufacture. One whole year was marked by intensive disorder, riots, murders, armed uprisings and assassinations of high Government officials. The cities of Peshawar and Chittagong witnessed exceptional outrages. A gang of armed revolutionaries raided an arms depot in Chittagong. It killed a British Sergeant-Major, and some Indian servants and made away with a large quantity of arms and ammunition. In Peshawar, the control of the city actually passed into the hands of an insurgent mob, encouraging some border tribes to raid in force. The movement was crushed in the usual way; mass arrests were made, jails were filled, and occasional firing on mobs was resorted to. The Muslim community, on the whole, stood aloof, the only exception being the Muslim following of the Congress in the North-West Frontier Province led by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan.

The report of the Royal Commission was issued in June 1930. It covered some eight hundred pages and was packed with facts and arguments. To follow it through is to lose sight of the wood for the trees. It proposed the abolition of Dyarchy and the establishment of autonomous provinces. It advocated the federal idea as the only political solution for a vast and varied land. It recommended extraordinary powers for Governors, unicameral legislatures for provinces and the expansion of the electorate to about ten per cent of the population. It tied up its conclusions with a proposal for inquiry into the readjustment of provincial boundaries. The report was received with as great a resentment as was the appointment of the commission that had prepared it. Critics dismissed it as a piece of unparalleled political humbug. By this time a Labour Government was again in office in Britain. It decided to shelve the Report and hold consultations with Indian leaders at a Round Table Conference in London.

7

The first session of the Round Table Conference, which was an unwieldy body of eighty-nine members, began on 12 November 1930, and lasted for some nine weeks. Fifty-eight of its members had been chosen in the name of various communities and interests in British India. The rest were drawn from the Princely states and political parties

of Britain. On account of the disparity of outlook and principles among its participants, the Conference was not suited for delicate discussions. Its doings were mostly wrapped in mystery and its membership was divided into factions and coteries which combined or fell apart as their interests, passing or permanent, dictated. The Congress was warring against Britain and was absent from the Conference. Those who attended were heard to confess privately as well as in public that they represented nobody except themselves. Like most large conferences, it started in confusion. No detailed agenda had been prepared in advance. The entire Indian delegation voted the late Aga Khan as its leader. The Conference was inaugurated by King Goerge V in the St. James' Palace. After the Royal speech, the Indian delegates started what appeared an elocution contest among themselves. They evinced considerable ardour, each one of them loud and insistent in advancing the demand for Indian self-government. Lord Zetland, one of the Conservative delegates, perceived that the harmony of chorus was merely superficial. Under a seemingly undisturbed exterior lay irreconcilable discords which did not take long in coming to the surface. The work of the Conference began in committees and was carried on behind closed doors.

The Muslim position was one of peculiar difficulty. The British Labour ministry was frankly averse to separatist politics. It proposed a large measure of self-rule and was willing to go ahead even if some of the more basic disputes (as Muslims viewed them) were not resolved.[92] The Hindu delegates were entirely satisfied with this position and adopted a stern attitude. Some Muslim delegates were dismayed, discouraged and demoralized. In their anxiety to stand well with the government of the day, they whittled down their demands and started exploring the avenues of a rapprochement with the Hindus. Their vacillation drew an angry protest from the Muslim Press in India and they were driven to their former attitude. From thence Hindu-Muslim differences overcast the Conference, rendering most of its proceedings nugatory. The Hindus desired a powerful central government occupying a position of dominance over provincial governments, while the Muslims stood for a loose federation of completely autonomous provinces. The Muslims demanded the maintenance of separate electorates and weightages, the Hindus their abolition. The Muslims claimed statutory majorities in the Punjab and Bengal, while the Hindus resisted their 'imposition'. In the Punjab the situation was complicated by inflated Sikh claims. Each one of these subjects gave rise to tedious and fruitless negotiations stirring up unreasonable scenes. Some prominent Princely delegates mediated and brought the two communities on the edge of an agreement. On 15 January *The Times* wrote editorially:

> The Hindu-Muslim quarrel which has overshadowed the later days of the India Conference came a good deal nearer to composition yesterday. As matters were left last night there was complete accommodation between Hindus and Muslims, and the controversy was

narrowed down to the demand of the Sikhs for a single additional seat in the Punjab Council.

But the hitch over the single additional seat proved insuperable and ruptured the negotiations on the very day that *The Times* carried the optimistic forecast. Four days later, the Conference broke up to meet in the first week of September. What emerged from it was a general agreement to write safeguards for minorities into the constitution and a vague desire to devise a federal system for the country. But the idea of federation meant very different things to the different parties—the Hindus, the Muslims and the Princes.

While the Round Table Conference was yet in session, Muhammad Iqbal adumbrated the plan for an independent Muslim state on the North-West of India in his address to the annual Muslim League at Allahabad in the last week of 1930. Iqbal was by no means the first to have advocated Partition, as it came to be called. The ground had been prepared for him by some prominent thinkers, Muslim as well as non-Muslim. Thus, it had come at the end of the nineteenth century from Mr (later Sir) Theodore Morison, the Principal of M.A.O. College, Aligarh, who referred to it as a speculative rather than a practical proposition. British rule was too firmly rooted in his day to permit any digression into an enquiry into the implications of his own suggestion. To him the greatest obstacle to Indian independence was the absence of a sentiment of nationality, (the greatest cohesive force in politics) in the country. He believed that 'where the sentiment of nationality exists it is possible in a people of comparatively low state of civilization' to maintain an independent political existence. 'But in its absence neither bravery, nor intelligence avails'. He further opined that the Muslims constituted a definite and homogeneous group conscious of its corporate exisence, and continued:

If the 57 million Muslims of India were all collected in one province or tract of country, if for instance, the north of India from Peshawar to Agra were inhabited exclusively by Muslims, a national sentiment associated with those territorial limits would already be in process of formation, which would suggest a partial solution of the present problem.[95]

For some time, we do not hear anything more about it. In 1922, Sardar Muhammad Gul Khan, a resident of the North-West Frontier Province and a man of considerable experience in public and administrative affairs, told the North-West Frontier Inquiry Committee that:

Hindu-Muslim unity will never become a fact, it will never become a *fait accompli* . . . . . We would much rather see the separation of Hindus and Mohammadans. 23 crores of Hindus to the South and 8 crores Muslims to the North. Give the whole portion from Raj Kumari to Agra to Hindus, and from Agra to Peshawar to Mohammadans. I mean transmigration from one place to another. This is an idea of exchange.[94]

In his autobiography, *Aap-Biti* written in Urdu and published from Lahore in 1923, Bhai Parmanand, a former revolutionary, stated that the police searched his house in 1912 and seized some of his private papers which included the rough draft of a letter addressed to Lajpat Rai containing a blue-print of a constitution for free India together with a proposal to push the Muslims across the river Indus. In another book, published in the same year,[95] the same author reiterated the proposal in a somewhat different fashion.[96] About this time Lajpat Rai also advised C.R. Das against the practicality, indeed the possibility, of a lasting political partnership between the Hindus and the Muslims. Commenting on the Nehru Report in the course of two articles, which appeared in *The Times* on 12 and 13 October 1928, the late Aga Khan observed:

India when freed from outside control, cannot have a unitary, non-federal government. The country must accept in all its consequences its own inevitable diversities, not only religious and historical, but also national and linguistic. It must base its constitution on an association of free states.

. . . By frank acceptance of the idea of an association of free states almost all the difficulties in the way of a *Swaraj* India will sooner or later disappear. Each free state would be based, not on considerations of size, but on those of religion, nationality, race, and language—plus history.

. . . The burning question of the protection of minorities would in a large measure be solved. The compact bodies of Muslims in North-West and East of India . . . would have free states of their own.

Iqbal's own ideas on the subject were summed up in the following observations:

. . . . . The political bondage of India has been and is a source of infinite misery to the whole of Asia. It has suppressed the spirit of the East and wholly deprived her of that joy of self-expression which once made her the creator of a great and glorious culture.[97]

. . . Let me tell you frankly that, at the present moment, the Muslims of India are suffering from two evils. The first is the want of personalities. Sir Malcolm Hailey and Lord Irwin were prefectly correct in their diagnosis when they told the Aligarh University that the community had failed to produce leaders. By leaders I mean men who, by divine gift or experience, possess a keen perception of the spirit and destiny of Islam, along with an equally keen perception of the trend of modern history. Such men are really the driving forces of a people, but they are God's gift and cannot be made to order. The second evil from which the Muslims of India are suffering is that the community is fast losing what is called the herd instinct. This makes it possible for individuals and groups to start independent careers without contributing to the general thought and activity of the community.[98]

. . . We are 70 millions and far more homogeneous than any other people in India. Indeed the Muslims of India are the only Indian people who can fitly be described as a nation in the modern sense of the word. The Hindus, though ahead of us in almost all respects, have not yet been able to achieve the kind of homogeneity which is necessary for a nation, and which Islam has given you as a free gift.[99]

. . . the Prime Minister of England apparently refuses to see that the problem of India is international and not national. . . . Obviously he does not see that the model of British democracy cannot be of any use in a land of many nations; and that a system of separate electorates is only a poor substitute for a territorial solution of the problem.[100]

. . . it is clear that in view of India's infinite variety in climates, races, languages, creeds and social systems, the creation of autonomous states based on the unity of language, race, history, religion and identity of economic interests, is the only possible way to secure a stable constitutional structure in India.[101]

. . . The Muslim demand for the creation of a Muslim India within India is, therefore, perfectly justified . . . I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state. Self-government within the British Empire or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim state appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India.[102]

Thus there was nothing very new in Iqbal's address, which caused an unwonted uproar in the Press.

After the adjournment of the Conference on 19 January 1931 in England, important developments took place in India. Gandhi suspended the civil disobedience movement after protracted negotiations with the Viceroy in which both of them had 'talked for hours and hours, morning, evening and up to midnight'. These 'heart to heart' talks, as they were blazoned abroad in the Congress Press, ended in the famous Delhi (or more popularly known as the Gandhi-Irwin) Pact. There was nothing striking about this brief agreement in which the Congress had agreed to give up the civil disobedience in exchange for a few minor concessions from the Government. Its impact was mainly psychological. The fact that the representative of the King had sued for peace and negotiated terms with the leader of the revolt dealt a fatal blow to the British prestige from which it never recovered. Gandhi earned an esteem and veneration which no Indian had enjoyed during the British rule. Many a bureaucrat at the top felt compelled to go to his residence to felicitate him and to pay him homage. The house in which he and his co-workers stayed came to be called the national secretariat by American journalists. The results of the experience were duly noted and understood by Gandhi's lieutenants. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote:

A ceaseless stream of people, of high and low degree, came to Dr Ansari's house, where Gandhiji and most of us were staying, and in our leisure moments we watched them with interest and profit. For

some years our chief contacts had been with the poor in towns and villages and those who were down and out in gaols. The very prosperous gentlemen who came to visit Gandhiji showed us another side of human nature, and a very adaptable side, for wherever they sensed power and success, they turned to it and welcomed it with the sunshine of their smiles. Many of them were staunch pillars of the British Government in India. It was comforting to know that they would become equally staunch pillars of any other government that might flourish in India.[103]

It became obvious that the first essential was to seize power. Once the battle was won and victory proclaimed, all hurdles would remove themselves. The hirelings, minions and favourites of one order will serve the next with equal fidelity. The representative character of the Congress had been acknowledged and it held this position with firmness and tenacity. Communal violence which had abated for a while in 1930 flared up again with its accustomed fulness. There were riots at Benares and Agra, and organized murder, pillage and arson at Cawnpore in which Muslims suffered heavily. The community's apprehensions grew and so did its insistence on constitutional safeguards.

With the Congress triumph all but complete and the Muslim attitude hardened, the work of the first session of the Round Table Conference was undone in yet another direction. The Princes, who had waxed eloquent over their readiness to throw in their lot with an Indian federation, discovered on second thoughts that they had acted rashly. Federation would diminish their authority by subjecting them to irksome central control. They suspected a trap and began to swallow their brave words one after another. The prospects of federation receded. The Labour party and Viceroy Irwin who had set great store by the Conference were sorely disappointed at the outcome.

In his parleys with the Viceroy, Gandhi had promised to persuade the Congress to join the Round Table Conference. But difficulties over the implementation of the Delhi Pact cropped up and the hopes of Congress participation faded. But the new Viceroy, Willingdon, (a pro-consul of long Indian experience), persevered. In detailed discussions, he convinced the Mahatama of the bona fides of the British Government. Gandhi seems to have yielded only on one point: He dropped his demand for the nomination of a 'nationalist' Muslim to the Conference and had himself appointed as the sole representative of the Congress. He sailed by the last possible boat which could carry him to England to join the Conference. His secretary has preserved a delightful account of the voyage,[104] in which he carried on his daily prayers and spinning. Reaching London on 12 September he declared that he was on a great and special mission. The British Government had arranged to lodge him in a West End hotel, but he declined state hospitality and preferred to put up in Kingsley Hall, Bow, amidst a small community of priests. On 15 September he made his first speech before a Conference committee expressing an invincible desire to stay in the Commonwealth in indissoluble partnership. Earlier he had stated that his visit was prompted by a spirit of co-operation and a quest

after points of agreement with Britain. But two days later, he began to suffer from a sense of frustration and to speak a different language. 'As I study the list of the delegates', he said, 'I see some very noticeable gaps, and so I am oppressed with a sense of unreality in connection with our composition.'[105] He complained that the Conference was an 'ill-assorted group' and that the delegates were the 'chosen ones' of Government. The discovery was rather belated. Surely, it could not mean that he only began to study the personnel of the Indian delegation after he had first addressed the Conference and spoken hopefully of the expected results. It is likely that by now he had assessed the situation, considered unfavourable by the Congress, which had been created by the replacement of the more friendly Labour Government by a predominantly Conservative-backed 'national' Government, when he was on his way to London. While he freely questioned the credentials of those gathered in London, he was never tired of asserting the competence of the Congress to represent 'the whole of India and all its varied interests'. He felt hurt that India's premier political organization was being treated just as one of the parties and not *the* party.[106]

In his book *Nine Troubled Years*, the India Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare (later Viscount Templewood) has recorded that Gandhi struck him as an astute, holy man with superb manners. He had 'an eye as pointed as needle' quick to pierce through every sham and a generous nature sensitive to emotional appeal. In speech he was very fluent and 'the hour brought no stop to his flood of words'. In committees he was completely indifferent as to whether he was repeating what he had already said many times before and did not care whether his audience was hostile or bored. Every time he was ready to go over the whole of his case with low voice and head bent down. His apparel which consisted of his characteristic loin cloth and sandals was the least suited for an English autumn. But he would not take to warmer clothing, insisting on wearing the dress of his principals, the people of India. His scanty wear almost brought about a crisis when the King gave an evening party for the delegates. The Monarch felt irritated at having to receive Gandhi at the Buckingham Palace without a proper dress. But ultimately he gave in. When the two met, he continued to look resentfully at the Mahatma's bare knees. The visit to England gave an excellent political platform to Gandhi. His countless admirers kept the public attention focussed on the most casual of his acts and observations. He met all sorts of people, academicians, churchmen, politicians, journalists and did all that lay in his power to awaken interest in, and sympathy for, the Congress movement. But his heart was not in the Conference. Though he attended its meetings regularly, he gave scant attention to its work. Indian members of the Conference complained that it was difficult to establish contact with him when he was needed for informal conversations.

The Conference session was not lacking in dramatic quality. At times there were emotional passages between the advocates of conflicting views. There were periods of tension and at times the atmosphere was charged with explosive possibilities. When it came to business, the question of Hindu-Muslim relations was the first to engage

the Conference. The Prime Minister did not relish the role of an arbiter. He made it plain that Indians must solve this problem for themselves. The first of the privileges and burdens of a self-governing people, he postulated, was to agree on how the democratic principle was to be applied. Accordingly, an *ad hoc* committee was set up to examine the problem. Negotiations, in which Gandhi widened the breach by declaring against communalism 'in every shape and form' and voicing unrelenting opposition to separate electorates, began in distrust and ended in despair. The failure caused no surprise.

The meeting of the Conference fixed for 8 October to receive the report of the conciliation committee provided one of the dramatic episodes of the session. A hushed silence fell on everybody as the Pime Minister took his seat and called upon Gandhi to speak. With slow delivery and the meticulous pronunciation of every syllable, he announced his failure with feelings of deep sorrow and deeper humiliation grumbling over the absence of those 'whose presence was necessary for an agreed solution. [107] Obviously this was a reference to the nationalist Muslim leader, Dr Ansari, whose nomination to the Conference he had failed to secure. He fretted at the absurdity of constitution-making at the wrong end and called for a reversal of the procedure. Instead of requiring Hindus and Muslims to make up their differences before determining the measure of constitutional advance, he asked the British Government to come out with concrete proposals of its own without waiting on communal hair-splitters.[108] The plea went thus: 'Further, you will allow me to say that the solution of the communal tangle can be the crown of the *Swaraj* constitution and not its foundation. Our differences have hardened, if they have not arisen, by reason of foreign domination. I have not a shadow of doubt that the iceberg of communal differences will melt under the warmth of the sun of freedom.'

The Prime Minister was provoked to the extent that he spoke out: 'Be honest and face the facts. The communal problem is a problem of fact. Does the problem exist in India or does it not exist? I do not answer. I leave you honestly to answer it for yourselves and to yourselves.'

Who torpedoed the settlement, at the Round Table Conference is an obvious question which must be briefly answered at this stage. We come across the following entry in Jawaharlal Nehru's *Autobiography:*

> (Gandhi) did not like many of the communal demands put forward on behalf of the Muslim delegates to the Conference . . . . . Some of these demands were a bar to democracy and freedom. But still he offered to accept the whole lot of them . . . . . without question or argument, if the Muslim delegates there joined forces with him and the Congress on the political issue, that is, on independence . . . . . The offer, however, was not accepted.[109]

This is a gross perversion. Nothing of the kind ever happened. Gandhi's stand on the communal question was never in doubt after the publi-

cation of the Nehru Report. Muslim leaders who met him after his pact with the Viceroy were told that he would not listen to any community of which even a single member was in the Congress.[110] The volume, *Nation's Voice*, containing the record of his speeches made in the Conference and elsewhere, does not support the tale of surrender. The burden of his speeches in England was that he could not be guided by the wishes of a 'mere majority' among Mulims and that, in bypassing the Congress Muslims he would be guilty of disloyalty to his erstwhile colleagues. The interview which the late Aga Khan had with Gandhi in the earlier days of the Conference and which clearly indicates the drift of the Mahatama's mind, can best be described in the Aga Khan's own words:

We posed together for the Press photographers, and then settled down to our conversation. I opened it by saying to Mahatmaji that, were he now to show himself a real father to India's Muslims, they would respond by helping him, to the utmost of their ability, in his struggle for India's independence. Mahatmaji turned to face me. 'I cannot in truth say', he observed, 'that I have any feelings of paternal love for Muslims. But if you put the matter on grounds of political necessity, I am ready to discuss it in a co-operative spirit. I cannot indulge in any form of sentiment.'

This was a cold douche at the outset; and the chilly effect of it pervaded the rest of our conversation. I felt that, whereas I had given prompt and ready evidence of a genuine emotional attachment and kinship, there had been no similar response from the Mahatmaji.[111]

The truth of the matter is that the Hindu Mahasabha had gained complete ascendency over the Congress in India and its foremost spokesman, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, had the upper hand of Gandhi in the Conference. This has been brought out by an eyewitness, Lord Zetland, in his address to the East India Association shortly after the Conference. Though Gandhi was strongly opposed on principle to the demands of Muslims, he says:

it is possible that (he) . . . . . might have persuaded himself of the expediency of agreeing to them. But at Mr. Gandhi's elbow, alert to detect and to quash any sign of weakness on the part of his less orthodox fellow-countryman, stood Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, leader of the Hindu *Mahasabha* . . . . . in his championship of Hindu orthodoxy adamant . . . . . There was little chance of acceptance of Muslim view on the part of this doughty upholder in its integrity of the ancient tradition of the caste Hindus.[112]

In one of his speeches Gandhi avowed that the job of making the Hindus consent to Muslim demands was like climbing the Mount Everest. [113] At that moment, the Muslims demanded a genuine federation for the country and proportional but separate electoral representation for their community. His partiality for Hindu sectional interests was obvious more than once. Sir Geoffery Corbett, a Goverment

adviser to the Indian delegation, proposed a scheme for the 'redistribution' (i.e. partition) of the Punjab. Gandhi commended the plan as well worth studying. He was also much attracted by a similar proposal of setting up two legislatures in the Punjab, one to satisfy the Muslim and the other the Sikh claims.[114] This unconscious admission of the efficacy of some sort of partition, territorial or psychological, between the communities to facilitate local settlement showed that the idea of a countrywide partition was not far off.

A much-observed feature of the Conference was an unceasing tug of war between Gandhi and Ambedkar. Dr Ambedkar, the leader of the untouchables, was an able advocate, fluent, audacious and aggressive. Gandhi took up the position that Untouchables were Hindus and that they could not be segregated from the main body of Hinduism. Ambedkar insisted that they needed separate constituencies and rigid protection. However, it was Ambedkar who took the initiative and approached the Mahatama. Gandhi would not think of a compromise on terms remotely resembling those of Ambedkar's. Gandhi's refusal turned him to other minority representatives and the result was an agreement commonly known as the Minorities Pact which was accepted neither by the Hindus nor by the Sikhs. It filled Gandhi with horror. 'I would not have self-government rather than have this pact' he commented.[115] The remaining sittings of the session were devoid of all interest. Muslim delegates held aloof and would not participate in the discussion of the details of a constitution which could not ensure the satisfactory settlement of their claims. They sat as silent spectators.

Ironically enough, the Round Table Conference which was intended to secure political accord in India resulted in a deeper conflict. The parties were more estranged and divided than ever before. To quote the Aga Khan once again:

> Always the argument returned to certain basic points of difference: was India a nation or two nations? Was Islam merely a religious minority, or were Muslims in those areas in which they were in a majority to have and to hold special political rights and responsibilites? . . . . . However close, therefore, we might come to agreement on points of detail, this ultimate disagreement on points of principle could not be bridged.[116]

Disappointment was the lot of those who had hoped that the Hindus and Muslims would succeed in the detached atmosphere of London. The scene of familiar wrangle merely shifted to London.

The last rites of the Conference were performed by the Prime Minister who told the delegates that in the absence of an agreement among themselves, the British Government would have to settle not only the problems of representation, but would also be compelled to devise constitutional checks to prevent the tyrannical use of the democratic principle expressing itself solely through majority power. This business like statement of the Prime Minister had a peculiar reception from Gandhi. His reaction put in one single sentence was that he would search for the 'hidden meaning' underlying it.[117]

Jinnah, who was not to be asked to the third and the concluding session of the Conference, recalled the circumstances of the first two Conferences in corrosive words several years later:

I received the shock of my life at the meetings of the Round Table Conference. In the face of danger, the Hindu sentiment, the Hindu mind, the Hindu attitude led me to the conclusion that there was no hope for unity . . . . . The Muslims were like the dwellers in no man's land[118]

This is the later interpretation of an earlier experience. Probably the desperation was not felt as acutely at the time. But the disillusionment had come. The Aga Khan, whose politics often touched the farthtest limits of caution and who had striven hard to keep himself above parties, discerned clearly the way the wind was blowing. He could not not keep his apprehensions to himself and brought out the Muslim dilemma in a letter which he published in the Press. He observed:

Muslim India is now at the parting of ways . . . . . On the one hand they are profoundly affected by the current of nationalism which has swept over India with a momentum and force that would have seemed impossible a few years ago. On the other, they are conscious of a need which in the past was but dimly comprehended—that of the preservation of their political identity and cultural existence.[119]

With all this before us, it is difficult to grasp the point of Gandhi's declaration: 'I have come empty handed but I am thankful that I have not compromised the honour of my country.'

After the Second Round Table Conference, the Montagu-Chelmsford constitution was introduced in the North—West Frontier Province. This was a act of justice. The refusal of the Government to democratize the bare constitution in this part of the country had the palpable support of congress leadership in the legislature.

The Prime Minister's award on the representation of communities in the legislatures (notified in an official statement on 2 August 1932), maintained the principle of separate electorates, retained the weightages, conceded Muslim majority in the Punjab not in a statutory but in a round-about fashion, and separated Sind from Bombay. On the whole, the award did not come up to Muslim expectations. But it approximated more closely to Muslim demands than to Hindu desires. Important Muslim sections at once hailed it as a victory. The non-Muslims in the Punjab, particularly the Sikhs, received it as yet another unkind cut from Britain and decided not to submit to it in silence. They freely bandied about threats of violence if the award was not altered to suit their wishes. The rumblings of a civil war could already be heard. By undertaking 'a fast unto death' Gandhi was able to have the Communal Award, as it was called, modified in so far as it had effected an electoral separation between the Hindus and Untouchables. After this limited success, the Congress officially declared itself neutral towards the award. The Muslims felt satisfied with this

friendly gesture and the improved relations between the communities were reflected in closer co-operation between the Congress and the League parties in the Central legislature from 1934 to 1936.

The Third Round Table Conference which sat in the winter of 1932-33 was a tame affair. Its membership was select and its proceedings tranquil. It grappled with minor and technical issues and was dominated by its lawyer members whose matter-of-fact deliberations drew far less attention than the effusions of politicians.

To complete the account of the Round Table Conferences, it is essential to take note of the work of Fazl-i-Husain whose official position as a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council (1930-35) gave him unusual opportunities of influencing the deliberations of the Conference. Most of the Muslim delegates to the first two Conferences were practically his proteges. He was anxious to keep out all those who merely wanted to play to the gallery, to curry favour with the Labour party or to loom large in the British Press by glittering utterances. He was extremely distrustful of Jinnah whom he still suspected of Congress sympathies, taking all precautions to reduce his influence to a minimum. In this he was largely successful. His worst fears came true in the first session of the Conference when the Labour government was believed to be working upon the Muslim delegation for the acceptance of joint electorates in one form or another. He censured the action of those who had allowed themselves to be enticed and wrote that they were motivated by unworthy reasons. He had the deserters condemned in the Muslim Press. He also made it plain to the Viceroy that the abolition of separate electorates would, in effect abrogate Muslim majorities in the Punjab and Bengali and foist on the country the Nehru constitution which the Muslim community had already unequivocally rejected. Throughout the sittings of the Conference, he took infinite pains to coach his key men, gave them detailed instructions in his weekly air-mail letters and kept them posted with notes and points. He laid down the proposition that the rights, interests and demands of Muslims could not be bargained away for the political advance of the country. Much of the criticism against Fazl-i-Husain was maliciously expressed and relied for its effect on crude invective. But the fact remains that Fazl-i-Husain was an adept at political manoeuvre and was trying to secure eminently practical ends by methods indistinguishable from intrigue.

The tortuous process of constitution-making culminated in the Act of 1935. As a measure of decentralization in the garb of a federation, it was remarkable for the clarity of its draftsmanship. The federation that it gave to the country was not based on natural affinities or popular urges. The exceptional powers given to the Viceroy and provincial Governors (called special responsibilities) looked like the revival of absolutism under constitutional forms. The Act also included some provisions for the protection of minorities which only proved the frailty of constitutional checks against determined majorities.

VI

THE LAST PHASE

The Act of 1935—*The Congress in power—World War II —The Pakistan Resolution—Constitutional schemes—'Quit India' disturbances—Transfer of power.*

1

THE Act of 1935 was a delicate piece of constitutional craftsmanship. The authors of the Constitution had spent years of arduous labour in devising a system that would somehow accommodate the clashing claims of the parties affected by it. The Royal Commission, appointed in 1927, reported two and a half years later. The Round Table Conferences, summoned in London in 1930 and in the following two years, struggled with proposals for the new constitution. The British Government formulated their own plans and submitted them to a Joint Parliamentary Committee for examination and improvement and it was on their recommendations that the Act of 1935 was based.

Part One of the Act, which provided for the reconstruction of the central government on a 'federal' basis, never came into force. Part Two conferred a more liberal constitution on the provinces, giving them limited autonomy in a carefully defined sphere. This part of the Act went into operation on the first day of April in 1937 and worked for a decade. This autonomy, hedged in with manifold restrictions, was no autonomy. The special responsibilities of the Governors alone reduced it to a nullity. The application of a Western democratic system to India only destroyed whatever of the liberal tradition had been built up in politics, and generated powerful Fascist trends in the reactionary nationalism of the Congress.

2

ELECTIONS to the legislatures of autonomous provinces were held in February and March 1937. The electorate, which had jumped from seven million to thirty-seven, also included women. The Indian National Congress, the largest and most disciplined group in the country, equipped with an efficient party machine and adequate finances, swept the polls in six provinces, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bihar, Orissa, Bombay and Madras. Although opposition parties met with an overwhelming disaster, the Congress with all its resources made no impression on Muslim majority provinces for it could not find a sufficient number of Muslim candidates to fight its battles. In three out of the six Hindu majority provinces, (Central Provinces, Orissa and Bombay) no Muslim cardholder of the Congress was elected. In the United Provinces, only one Congressite Muslim was returned and the Muslim president of the Provincial Congress Committee was put to rout. Moreover, the Congress fight was lacking

in directness. In Bengal a good proportion of its candidates was drawn from feudal and aristocratic classes. As the elections approached, the Muslim League was more dead than alive. It was practically non-existent in Muslim provinces. Even so its hurriedly improvised election board did well in every province except the Punjab.

In accordance with statutory requirements, the provincial Governors summoned the leaders of majority parties in provincial legislatures and requested their assistance in the formation of ministries. These invitations were readily accepted in the non-Congress provinces of the Punjab, Bengal, Sind, North-West Frontier Province and Assam which started functioning as 'autonomous' units from the first of April. The Congress leaders refused to accept office unless they were categorically assured that the Governors would refrain from using their special powers under the Constitution. The Governors declined to give the undertaking and proceeded to instal interim ministries consisting of the representatives of such parties and groups as were found willing to accept office. Obviously, the legislatures of these provinces could not be summoned. In Bombay, Bihar and the United Provinces, these interim ministries were headed by Muslims. These ministries included some Muslim Leaguers but they were not League ministries.

After refusing office, the Congress turned its propaganda batteries against the new constitution, denouncing it as inadequate, anti-democratic and anti-national. The India Secretary and the Governor-General tried to answer the Congress charges and informed the critics that extraordinary powers of the Governor were only meant for exceptional use and that gubernatorial interference had never been contemplated in day-to-day administration. The Congress had only to operate the constitution to be convinced of the generosity of the measure of control transferred to popular Ministers. Though these assurances did not follow the pattern prescribed by Congressmen, yet they proceeded to accept office after enunciating a few platitudes.

The Congress Party entered upon its official career in July 1937, and remained in power till the end of 1939. Its declared object in office-acceptance was to wreck the constitution from within and thus to expose its reactionary character. It had convincing majorities in legislatures and needed no allies. Its leaders adopted a strictly legalistic attitude, turning down offers of co-operation from all other groups. In particular they ignored the Muslims and recruited all Ministers in all provinces exclusively from their own ranks. In the central legislature, the Congress and the League parties had tactically supported each other during the preceding two years. It was expected that this co-operation would be continued in the provinces, for there was even an understanding that the two would run provincial governments on a coalition basis. The breach of faith amazed and annoyed the Muslims, while the Congress leaders explained the exclusion of minority representatives from cabinets by appealing to the theory of collective ministerial responsibility which, they argued, was the essence of parliamentary democracy. For the League to insist on forcing its way into a Congress cabinet was as constitutionally erroneous as for the Conservatives to demand representation in a Labour cabinet in Britain or vice

versa. Constitutional principles they, added, could not be sacrificed at the altar of expediency. The reasoning was specious for India was not Britain. In a country where the strength of parliamentary majorities and minorities was not subject to marked variations under the scheme of separate electorates, the analogy borrowed from Britain was inapplicable. The Congress suggestion that it was a purely political organization prepared to receive everyone irrespective of his sectarian affiliations was not a satisfactory answer. By now a large number of Muslims had left the Congress, while the few who remained felt increasingly isolated from their community. The character of an organization is determined by its actions and not by its formal assertions. But for the *Khilafat* interlude, the Congress had always been a Hindu body. Quite naturally it reflected the Hindu spirit and expressed Hindu prejudices and purposes. And yet no Congress leader could be made to acknowledge this fact, for this admission would detract from his own importance. Gandhi himself told a representative of the *News Chronicle* that . . . . . there was only one party which could deliver the goods, and that was the Congress. I would not accept any other party except the Congress', and he added,

'Damn it by whatever name you may, there can be only one party in India and that is the Congress.[1]

The same attitude was typified in Jawaharlal Nehru's statement that even a microscope would not reveal the existence of minorities in India. His declarations after the elections: 'There are only two parties in the country, the Congress and the Government, the rest must line up', and 'those who are not with us are against us', showed his Fascist inclinations. The Congress invited prominent Muslims to earn eligibility for cabinet positions by dissolving their own party and coming over to the Congress. A few Muslim legislators, Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim in U.P. and M.Y. Nuri in Bombay got into Congress cabinets by signing the Congress pledge. That this short cut to power found little favour with the Muslim electorate was conclusively shown by the results of by-elections in which the Congress lost heavily in Muslim districts. No Muslim Minister was appointed in Orissa. The only one commissioned in the Central Provinces, Sharif, was removed for an allegedly improper use of his official powers and his place went to a Hindu.

While coalitions were out of the question in Congress provinces, exigency dictated the opposite course in non-Congress provinces where Congress parties were permitted to coalesce and share power with others. This stroke of policy enabled the Congress leadership to organize harassing political raids to keep the Muslim community divided and confused. Fazl-ul-Haq, the Premier of Bengal, whose position was, at times, rendered precarious by the refractory elements in the coalition, revealed in his address to the Calcutta Muslim League in 1938 that the Congress had made repeated overtures for putting him at the head of a more stable Congress coalition as the price for deserting the Muslim League. Similarly, in Sind where the weightage granted under

the Communal Award had given a great strategic advantage to the Hindus, the Congress successfully prevented the formation of a Muslim League group in the legislature. In the North-West Frontier Province the non-Congress ministry succumbed to Congress manoeuvres. The accusation that the Congress was out to break all other parties and establish itself as the only political party in the country was only too true. The doctrine 'One country, one party' inevitably led to the cult of 'One leader'. This leadership was supplied by Gandhi whose role in this organization was altogether individual. The Congress governments sought his advice on almost every occasion and accepted it with the sanctity of a religious injunction. Whether it was a constitutional crisis, a tussle with the Governor, or an issue of general policy, the Premiers of Congress-governed provinces regularly called on him for guidance. He negotiated with the Viceroy on behalf of the Congress but kept up the appearance of a politically neutral observer. He wielded dictatorial control over the Congress, but his name did not even appear on the party roll. One of his chosen friends, Seth Govind Das, summed up the character and immensity of his influence in the following words: 'Gandhi occupies the same position among Congressmen as that held by Mussolini among Fascists, Hitler among Nazis and Stalin among Communists. The Congress as at present constituted is the erection of Mahatma Gandhi.' Thus, the Congress claim that parliamentary mentality had come to stay in the Congress had no foundation. It had yet to be nurtured.

Under the Congress rule, power did not reside in the regular organs of the Constitution. The Ministers were responsible neither to the electorate nor to the legislatures. They were the liegemen of the Congress executive, called the Working Committee, which appointed and dismissed Ministers, dictated policies and laid down procedures. The day-to-day work of Congress Ministers was scrutinized by regional supervisors, collectively called the Parliamentary Board, which derived its authority from the Working Committee. Its supervisory functions were not formal and nominal but real and extensive. The Provincial Congress Committees claimed the right to influence the decisions of the administration, while local committees meddled with the functioning of petty officials and police. In some provinces, district officers were instructed to take local Congressmen into confidence in the settlement of local disputes, the administration thus being integrated with the party organization. The monolithic character of the party machine destroyed whatever measure of autonomy had been allowed to the provinces. The Muslim League, emulated Congress methods, though its control was far less absolute. Thus provincial autonomy was doomed at the hands of parties with a unitary outlook.

Two incidents will further illustrate the totalitarian methods of the Congress. The first one of these occurred in July 1938, in the Central Provinces where Dr. Khare led an ineffective cabinet divided by regional and linguistic wrangles. All efforts to patch up its internal differences failed and after several rounds of conflict with his antagonists, the Premier resigned along with two of his colleagues. The remaining three Ministers refused to depart even when their resignations

were demanded by the Governor. They pleaded that the Congress Parliamentary Board alone was competent to drive them out of office. Left with no other choice, the Governor ordered their dismissal and again invited Dr. Khare to form a new ministry. Dr. Khare accepted the mandate and reconstituted the ministry without reference to the appropriate Congress authority. The Congress executive promptly censured him for a grave error of judgement and for flouting Congress directives. Constitutionally, Dr. Khare's action was correct. Some weeks before the clash actually took place, the chairman of the Parliamentary Board had assured him of support against his recalcitrant colleagues. The Congress would not forgive the Governor for playing his part, even though it was strictly constitutional, nor the Premier for not waiting on the Working Committee for orders. Dr Khare was removed from the leadership of the Assembly Congress party and expelled from the organization. This dictatorial exercise of power was subjected to the widest criticism and led to a spiteful controversy. The statement issued by Dr Khare on his own deposition had all the characteristics of an extorted confession and was released to the Press only after it had received Gandhi's approval. Dr. P.B. Sitarammiyya, a member of the Congress Parliamentary Board, sunbbed the critics:

> If there is any person who imagines that our structure should be subordinated to the flimsy notions of democracy and parliamentary conventions, let that person remember that we are in a period of transition. These goody goody notions of constitutional propriety are not applicable to the Congress in the present conditions prevailing in the country.[2]

The argument for party dictatorship was hard to improve upon. Gandhi was unsparing both in his criticism of Dr Khare and of the critics of the Congress executive. In the course of a statement on the subject, he went to the root of the matter:

> . . . . . the Congress, conceived as a fighting machine, has to centralize, control and guide every department and every Congressman, however highly placed, and expect unquestioned obedience.[3]

The whole affair lowered the stock of the Congress with a cross section of its own following.

The other episode centred round the personality of S.C. Bose who was elected President of the Indian National Congress in 1938 and sought re-election in the following year. He was duly elected but his success turned out to be a storm signal. It is true that a few Congress leaders had opposed the renewal of his candidature, though the extent of underground reistance, encouraged, if not actually fostered, by no less a person than Gandhi, was not generally known. When the results of the election were announced. many a Congressman was stunned at Bose's success being publicly described as a personal defeat for the Mahatama. The members of the Congress executive, all under Gandhi's influence, at first, promised not to embarrass their chief, but

they backed out and resigned in a body. Their letter of resignation was understood to have been drafted by Gandhi, who even threatened to withdraw from the Congress if Bose continued in office and declined to attend meetings held under his presidency. The Gandhian votaries carried the dispute into the open session of the Congress and had the satisfaction of obtaining a favourable verdict from errant voters. Rejected by Gandhi and deserted by his life-long friends, the democratically elected President of the Congress felt increasingly isolated. His attempt to canvass public support won him a fresh ban which farbade him offering himself as a candidate for any party office for a period of three years. All this was taking place at a time when Gandhi was defending Bose's right to organize a protest against the manner in which the Congress had disgraced him.

It is not possible here to give a fuller analysis of the technique of Congress propaganda, but some of its principal features may briefly be noted. With a confidence born of a sure and undivided possession of authority, it became usual with Congressmen to employ highly philosophical vocabulary for the promotion of partisan ends. Some of them including B.G. Pant, C. Rajagopalachari and even Gandhi himself, were profuse in declarations of their own large-heartedness and issued altruistic disclaimers of all designs upon power. 'Put your trust in us and all will be well', or 'We are not interested in power. Let Muslims have it all', and again 'We shall gladly exchange Muslim rule with British rule'. But few showed any real concern for creating a more helpful environment. The statement of the Congress Premier of Bihar to the effect that he would lay down his life if a single brick of a mosque were touched appeared theatrical when the abolition of a cumulative system of voting resulted in the defeat of every Muslim candidate in the very first local bodies' elections held under his rule. The choir of self-adulation was only matched with the spate of reproaches hurled at the Muslim League which was now beginning to show signs of life and vitality. Gandhi did not hesitate to castigate it in the habitual language of a politician, arraigning it as the agent of Imperialism and the enemy of India's freedom and progress. He thundered that it was out to sell itself to the highest bidder and contemptuously dismissed its demands as insatiable.

Jawaharlal Nehru fought with different weapons. He denied the existence of a Hindu-Muslim problem and stressed that the economic issue was the only issue. He pleaded ignorance of every fact which controverted his opinions and upbraided opponents for their lack of understanding. Throughout the year 1937 and for the greater part of 1938, he was involved in a public controversy with Jinnah in which both argued their respective cases with considerable skill. The prolific dispute served no purpose, for each one of them was 'pained' to read the other's letters. Each had his own definition of the major and the minor, and each quoted the other to his own advantage, both repeating themselves endlessly.

It was deliberate Congress policy to play up nationalist Muslims in this polemic. The utterances of this class received disproportionate space in the Hindu Press which loudly acclaimed their steadfast political

loyalty and praised their political acumen. In their zeal, the nationalist Muslims outdid the Congress and advocated Muslim submission to it in a language which was harsh rather than convincing. The active hostility of the Muslim masses to the Congress was clearly demonstrated by the failure of the Congress mass contact movement launched among them during these days. The very fact of such a movement was an admission of Congress' Hindu character and a disaffirmation of its national mandate. The refusal of the Congress to deal with any of the Muslim organizations, observed Dr. Ambedkar, was not only stupid but also mischievous.[4] The generality of Muslims interpreted this as dividing and causing confusion in their ranks, and weakening them.

Exclusion from power meant for the Muslims, as it would for any-one, exclusion also from the benefits of power. In the United Provinces, the newly recruited personnel of several beneficent departments was almost entirely Hindu in composition. The 'merit principle' about which the Congress had always professed profound solicitude worked to the detriment of the Muslims alone.

The *Bande Matram* controversy further aggravated the already tense atmosphere. The Hindu majorities in the legislatures of the Congress provinces insisted on commencing the day's deliberations with the recital of the *Bande Matram*, which the Muslims resented. This song was introduced as a war cry against the Muslims in a Bengali novel, *Anandamutha*, written by the Bengali novelist, Bunkim Chander Chatterji, and published in 1882, about the time of the Ilbert Bill agi-tation. The background of this pseudo-historical novel is the Sanyasi rebellion of 1772 in which several thousands of lawless bandits went about ravaging the countryside. The song consists of thirty-six lines out of which only seven are in Bengali ingeniously blended with twenty-nine lines of Sanskrit. Though all Bengali scholars are agreed upon the excellence of its rhythm, no one holds it innocuous. The Hindus of Bengal had begun to use it as a 'national' anthem in the days of the anti-partition agitation. The context from which it was culled wounded Muslim susceptibilities and Muslim members of legislatures protested, staging walk-outs. Their remonstrances were brushed aside in spite of the fact that Jawaharlal Nehru had upheld Muslim objections against some of its lines.

To this was added the dispute about the *lingua franca*. Eversince 1835, Urdu had been employed as the court language over the greater part of Northern India, but with increasing political consciousness, the Hindus had sought to replace it with Hindi. In this own day, Sayyid Ahmad Khan had reacted against this decisively. The over-drawn claims presented on behalf of Hindi had powerful influence in shaping his political creed. Gandhi tried to resolve the difficulty by recommending the use of simple Hindustani (a blend of Urdu and Hindi rid of the unassimilable vocabulary of Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit), to be written in both scripts, Persian and Devanagri. This was not an unfair solution of a problem bristling with political and emotional difficulties, but the Congress Governments ignored Gandhi's compromise formula and adopted active measures for the encourage-ment of a highly artificial form of Sanskritized Hindi. Current and com-

monly understood legal terms of Persian derivation were thrown overboard, to be substituted by their ponderous Sanskrit equivalents. The only anxiety of these neo-linguists was to purge the language of the colloquialisms of Persian and Arabic. The Muslims also felt disquieted at the unsuitable scheme of studies evolved by a committee of experts under the guidance of Gandhi which was merely intended to aid the revival of traditional cultural values of the Hindu society.

The Muslims employed in higher rungs of public services found their influence reduced, their prestige undermined and, in quite a number of instances, their security of tenure threatened. They did not enjoy the confidence of their superiors, and, therefore lost the respect of their subordinates. Instances of victimization are on record. Dr. Khare, the ex-Premier of the Central Provinces, revealed in a press interview that his cabinet had vigorously opposed the confirmation as district officer of the only Muslim civilian in the province for no other reason than that he was a Muslim.

Lastly, the Muslim masses were victims alike of the high-handedness of their neighbours and of the excesses of the administrative machine. In certain localities in the Central Provinces, the houses of Muslims were set on fire and their women-folk molested or abducted. In one instance, the entire Muslim male population of a village, numbering about one hundred and fifty was collectively accused of murder, summoned to the police station, kept without food or water, subjected to indignities during the inquiry, subsequently found innocent and acquitted by the court.[5] In the Central Provinces legislature, the Ministers freely expressed opinions on *sub judice* cases in which Muslims figured as accused, seriously embarrassing the judges in the performance of their duties. In one of his outspoken judgements, the Chief Justice of the Nagpur High Court described indignantly how the police, the Congress notables, the magistracy, the judiciary and even the Ministers had joined hands, and nearly succeeded in sending innocent persons to the gallows, the only reason being that they were Muslims[6]. In different towns in the United Provinces, the Muslims 'voluntarily' consented to music being played before mosques at the prayer hour and abandoned cow slaughter in deference to the Hindu religious feeling. These 'agreements' appeared to have closed long-standing disputes, but in fact they were achieved by threats.

In all provinces, particularly those under Congress rule, the Governors were content to play a constitutional part. Their relations with Ministers, which were amicable on the whole, were disturbed when differences arose over the release of political prisoners in Bihar and the United Provinces. The Ministers were keen on a generous grant of indemnity, while the Governors counselled discretion. Differences led to a crisis, but the storm blew over. On another occasion, the Congress Ministers in Orissa opposed the temporary appointment of a senior civilian serving in the province to the office of Governor and carried their point, when the permanent incumbent decided to forego his vacation. When taken to task by the Congress high command for dismissing the three Ministers of the Khare cabinet, the Governor took the rebuff in good part. In this context, the special res-

ponsibilities of the Governors became a dead letter and safeguards for minorities illusory. A deputation of Bombay Muslim Leaguers waited on the Governor, Sir Roger Lumley, to convey to him their resentment over the inclusion of a Congressite Muslim in the provincial cabinet. They pointed out that the protection of minorities was a statutory obligation of the head of the province and requested the replacement of the Congressite Minister by a representative Muslim. The Governor replied that he did not agree with the deputationists' idea of his special responsibilities, his only duty being to ensure that a Muslim was included in the cabinet. In some cases the Governors vied with Congress Ministers in issuing statements in mutual appreciation of each other's statesmanship.

It was Fazl-ul-Haq, the Bengal Premier, who first drew public attention to Muslim grievances against Congress rule, which was ignored by the Hindu newspapers. But they promptly came out with denials and even counter-charges against the Muslims. The results of the brief Congress rule raised once more the main question, of the Muslims' future in a self-governing India. In the previous decade the discussion had been largely academic, but the actual experience of majority rule in a limited sphere, while British authority was still intact, gave a glimpse of what *Swaraj* would mean to those who remained outside its pale. It foreshadowed a permanent Hindu government ruling over the minorities and demonstrated the unworkability of parliamentary rule, the constitutional safeguards for minorities proving fragile. The Muslims felt that the remedy for minority troubles did not lie within a federal framework, because the advantages offered by provincial autonomy would be negatived if the central government was placed, as it was bound to be, under Hindu domination. It was this situation which brought the Muslims League and Jinnah to the fore.

Jinnah's association with the Indian National Congress dated back to 1905 and his membership of the central legislature to 1910. In his early career as a Congressman, he had sternly disapproved of separate Muslim representation, He led a deputation to England in 1913 to place before the British Government the Congress case for the reform of the India Council. In the same year, he joined the Muslim League, insisting that this connection would not be allowed to interfere with his primary loyalty to the Congress. He belonged to that small fellowship of politicians who mediated between the Congress and the League to produce the Lucknow Pact. Mr Montagu, who met him in 1917, recorded that it was outrageous that a man of his calibre should have no part in running the Government of his country.[7] In 1919, a collection of his speeches on Hindu-Muslim relations was published with a foreward by the poetess Sarojini Naidu in which she described Jinnah as the 'ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity' and eulogized him, for his loyalty to principles, indomitable courage and scrupulous sense of honour. In 1920, he left the Congress. The politics of the twenties which culminated in an unqualified acceptance of the Nehru Report by the All-Parties Convention initiated in him a process of learning and unlearning which was gradual and unconscious. The transition was accompanied by a good deal of intellectual indecision

which was clearly felt by those who watched him carefully. Writing about his contribution to the Round Table Conferences, Lord Templewood, Sir Samuel Hoare of earlier days, stated: 'It might have been imagined that he might have given the lead to his delegation. It is true that he intermittently took a prominent part in the debates. But many of us could never follow the movements of his volatile mind. He never seemed to wish to work with anyone'.[1] After the Second Round Table Conference Jinnah settled down in England but was persuaded by some of his political friends to come back to India. About the autumn of 1937 he received a remarkable communication from Mohammad Iqbal detailing certain sacrilegious incidents of recent occurrence, expressing grave concern over the future of the Muslims under the Indian federation, prescribing the creation of an independent Muslim state in the North-West of India as the only way out of the communal impasse and assuring him that the Muslims would trust in his stewardship. The Muslim League that Jinnah led after 1937 was an aggressively self-conscious mass organization which claimed the exclusive right to speak for the Muslims of India.

3

ENGLAND declared war against Germany on 3 September 1939. India followed suit two days later, not as a willing fighter on the side of democracy but, and this was suggested by the Congress, as a helpless dependency tied to the apron strings of British Imperialism. The Viceroy at once decided to postpone the implementation of the Federal part of the Act of 1935 for which preparations had gone on under his personal supervision. To secure popular backing for the war effort he offered to expand his Executive Council by including representatives of popular opinion in the country. Both Gandhi and Jinnah were offered seats on the Council board, but both refused. England's difficulty was Congress' opportunity and she demanded the declaration of Britain's war aims. This was a euphemistic way of questioning Britain's sincerity. If Britain's concern for the preservation of the democratic way of life was genuine, she must prove it by establishing a full-fledged responsible government in this country. After some hesitation the Governor-General started a series of interviews with the leaders of various parties and interests and came to the conclusion that there was a wide margin of disagreement between Indians themselves and that, therefore, the question of political advance had better wait till the war was won. Upon this, the Congress leaders declared that the war was none of their making, for it had been declared on their behalf without their consent. At the same time, they decided to withdraw from legislatures, to quit office and to continue their political activities unburdened by official responsibilities. Accordingly, the Ministers in all Congress provinces resigned *en bloc* leaving the provincial administrations in the hands of Governors. From now onwards popular governments functioned only in the Punjab, Sind and Bengal. The All-India Muslim League marked the occasion by ob-

serving a Deliverance Day, expressing its relief at the termination of Congress rule.

4

When the Muslim League met at Lahore in March 1940, it passed the famous Pakistan Resolution which stated that;

No constitutional plan would be workable in this country or be acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principles, namely, that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial adjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute Independent States in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign'[1].

This resolution implied the independence of these two states from India but not of one anthor for the subsequent League resolution of April 1946 spoke of East and West Pakistan as one sovereign state.

Although Muslim separatist tendencies had become evident over a long period of time, Hindu India received it as a startling development. The Hindu Press at once opened an interminable debate about the advisability as well as the practicability of Partition. The Muslim Press joined the issue and the controversy revolved round two points, first, whether or not the Muslims of India were a separate nation and secondly, whether the India of the future should be one state or two. In the earlier stages, the Hindus tried to kill the Muslim demand for self-determination with ridicule. When the controversy went to the masses, it was often debased by vulgarities and generated more heat than light. The disputants in the streets did not inform or expound, they merely scorned and ridiculed. Much was spoken and written in defence and offence but neither side could win this battle of words. Here we can only attempt the briefest summary of the best discernable in either position.

The Muslim League. The Muslim League viewed India, not as a country but essentially as a sub-continent, dismissing the unity of India as a mere fiction. In the past, the sub-continent had been united only under a few strong and ambitious rulers but had invariably fallen to pieces with the removal of the iron hand, and it was bound to disintegrate again after the departure of the British. 'Nation' and 'nationality' were purely Western concepts with little relevance to the facts of Indian life, for the Western democratic forms presupposed a community with an identity of interests and unity of thought which were absent in India. In the sub-continent religion was not an individual or personal affair for neither Islam nor Hinduism were religions in the sense in which the West understands religion. Properly speaking, they were two social codes and represented two distinct civilizations, being as distinct from one another in traditions and manner of life as are the nations of Europe. Divergent nationalities of India would not be

transformed into a nation by virtue of common subjection to a democratic constitution. In constitutional usage Muslims were described as a minority, but they could not be likened to European minorities. They were a nation by any definition of the term, and party government coupled with parliamentarism would lead to their permanent servitude. No nation would be willing to accept a democratic constitution which endangered its own integrity. The Muslims, as a national group living in a definite territory, were entitled to separate statehood. Jinnah compressed these ideas in one of his best-known passages.

The Hindus and Muslims belong to two religious philosophies, social customs and literatures. They neither intermarry nor interdine ..... and, indeed, they belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Their aspects on life and of life are different ..... Hindus and Muslims derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, different heroes, and different episodes. Very often the hero of one is the foe of the other, and, likewise their defeats and victories overlap.[9]

The Indian National Congress. The Congress opposed the League thesis with a different set of theories. It argued, in the first instance, that the achievement of Pakistan was an ambition of fanatics and maniacs and that an independent Muslim state in the sub-continent would be an eternal menace to India. Different Muslim races had forced their way into the country through the North-Western passes and history might yet repeat itself with the new state developing extra-territorial affinities. A whisper in Assam would re-echo in Istanbul and Ankara and India would not be the only sufferer; for it would be equally disturbing to Britain. Internally, a Muslim state would be undesirable, as it would deny equal citizenship to Hindus. Gandhi and his school, saturated with the spirit of primeval Hinduism, instigated prejudice against Partition by calling it the 'vivisection of motherland', 'cutting up a baby into two halves', and the 'cutting of mother cow', Less panicky sections of Congress questioned the economic viability of the proposed state. There were some Hindus who viewed the demand for Partition as a bargaining counter, an attempt at wresting the maximum political advantage under the threat of secession, while others denounced it as the betrayal of the Muslim minority that would still be left in India. The prolonged arguments about the merits of Partition were further complicated and embittered by the wrangle over the representative status of the two organizations. The Congress was loud and vehement in its assertions that the Muslim community did not desire to be represented by the League; while Jinnah was equally emphatic that the Congress was a merely Hindu organization. He offered to negotiate a settlement with the Congress provided it agreed to the principle of Partition but the two points of view were so wide apart that no composition was possible.

Jawaharlal Nehru, who has taken pains to show up the impudence of the League leaders but passes over Hindu flippancy and virulence as

'a passionate reaction in favour of Indian unity', thus leads an attack on the concept of a separate Muslim nationality:

Mr Jinnah's demand was based on a new theory he had recently propounded—that India consists of two nations, Hindus and Muslims. Why only two I do not know, for if nationality was based on religion, then there were many nations in India. Of two brothers one may be a Hindu, another a Muslim, they would belong to two different nations. These two nations existed in varying proportions in most of the villages in India. They were nations which had no boundaries; they overlapped. . . . . . Probably the essential characteristic of national consciousness is a sense of belonging to one another and of togather facing the rest of the mankind. How far that is present in India as a whole may be a debatable point.

. . . Religious barriers are obviously not permanent, as conversions take place from one religion to another, and a person changing his religion does not thereby lose his racial background or his cultural and linguistic heritage.[10]

This fallacious statement shows up its author's ignorance in attributing the paternity of the concept of a separate Muslim nation to Jinnah. The fluidity of religious divisions in India is a myth while the clash of creeds is abiding. Religious conversion is the exception rather than the rule for in the thirties Gandhi had advocated the banning of conversions in free India. Even high judicial opinion in India today discountenances conversion (obviously from Hinduism to some other faith) as tending to undermine the civic and political loyalty of the convert[11]. In the rarest of instances where 'of two brothers one may be a Hindu, another a Muslim', the convert is completely lost to the society of his origin. In every case, he has to start life a new and strike roots in a totally different social soil. It is true that he does not part with his racial background—and Nehru himself is the first to admit that racial questions cannot and do not arise in India—he becomes part and parcel, willingly of course, of a society with a different scale of values and an entirely different cultural lineage. Finally, by accepting a well-known definition of nationality (*i.e.*, the sense of belonging to one another) and admitting that the existence of national consciousness in the country is a moot point, Nehru surrenders the entire case. Starting with a staunch advocacy of Indian unity, he forgets what he set out to prove by the time he reaches the end of the argument.

However, the strife between the Congress and the League was unequal. There was a paucity of talent in the latter organization and Jinnah had to cope with the whole of its work single-handed, his personal limitations becoming the limitations of the movement. Less than a decade ago Jinnah was one of the Muslim leaders whose right to speak on behalf of the community could well be disputed. Now as the Muslim leader, backed neither by a powerful party machine nor by a Press worth the name, he acquired a remarkable hold over the Muslim masses. Within the organization he had to make compromises to maintain the facade of unity, for key positions in the League often went to the men who contributed to its weakness and not to those who contri-

buted to its strength. This was unfortunate for the League, particularly when the Congress exercised iron discipline within its ranks. Throughout his public career, Jinnah had looked upon politics as the business of the upper five, and even into the mass movement that he now led, he imported something of the aristocratic reserve of his former days. He was always forthright, even pungent, in the expression of his views, unaccustomed to subtleties of language, mental reservations and equivocations. This was a decided disadvantage in a duel with the Congress leaders who could give an impression of magnanimity to those unacquainted with their methods. By comparison, Jinnah could be made to appear crude, intolerant and small-minded and some of his phrases could be twisted to mean that he was asking for Pakistan of Britain instead of relying on the inherent strength of his case. His adversaries pounced upon utterances of this kind to present him abroad as a lackey of Britain which was not the case. Mr Jinnah, wrote Dr Ambedkar, by no means a friendly critic, can never be suspected of being a tool in the hands of the British, even by the worst of his enemies . . . At the same time it is doubtful if there is a politician in India to whom the adjective incorruptible can be more fittingly applied . . . Anyone who knows what his relations with the British Government have been will admit that he has always been their critic, if indeed, he has not been their adversary. No one can buy him. For it must be said to his credit that he has never been a soldier of fortune.[12]

5

Beginning in 1939, World War II passed through several phases. The British position was shaky with the Nazi subjugation of France in June, 1940 and critical after the Japanese irruption at the end of 1941. The Congress aim to manoeuvre itself into the control of central government was stated directly and pursued relentlessly. Sometimes the Congress operated in the open but quite often behind the scenes and through satellite and subsidiary organizations, its methods varying as the balance of advantage lay with one or the other of the contending blocs. In the earlier days, when the British dominion over the subcontinent was unchallenged, the Congress leadership was comparatively suave and pliant, with Gandhi declaring himself a friend of Britain bound by many personal ties. He admitted that the blessing of peace and ordered government in India was a gift of Britain and that the country would return to the state of nature if Britain collapsed. In the course of a private interview with the Viceroy, he discounted the value of the independence accruing to India from the enslavement of France and Britain. While the Viceroy appreciated Gandhi's friendliness, he was anxious to rescue the country from the state of suppressed civil war brought about by the Congress ascendency in the provinces. He impressed upon Gandhi and other Congress leaders the importance of coming to terms with the Muslim League for the formation of coalition ministries and promised that a satisfactory agreement in the provincial sphere would be followed by a more acceptable reconstruction of the central government. This was exactly the opposite of what

the Congress had expected or worked for. It wanted to seize power, not to share it. While Jinnah was understandably willing to discuss the feasibility of the Viceregal scheme, Gandhi opposed it with the demand for an immediate implementation of the recent Congress resolution on India's right to frame her constitution through an elected constitutent assembly. For some time to come, an Indian constituent assembly became the principal weapon in the armoury of Congress propaganda. The idea was not new. It had been discussed threadbare in the late thirties. Gandhi, who had taken little interest in it till then, suddently warmed up and threw quite a few hints about its composition and *modus operandi*. In the first place, he saw no objection to the Muslims and other recognized minorities being elected by a communal vote if they were represented 'in exact proportion to their numbers'. This caution was hardly necessary as no electoral manipulation can convert a twenty-five per cent minority into a majority. In the second place, he would leave the minorities to determine whatever they deemed essential for their protection except in matters of common interest where they would be bound by the 'composite majority decision'. This concession was less munificent than it appeared as it is not possible to isolate sectional interests from general issues. Questions of representation, admission to public services and freedom of worship are as crucial for a minority as they are for a majority. A constitution made by an assembly of Gandhian conception, the opponents averred, would virtually come from the Congress Working Committee and would, therefore, be unacceptable. The prospects did not improve when Gandhi agreed to allow the minorities to take their grievances against the constituent assembly to a judicial tribunal of the highest authority, and the whole plan was talked out in a few months.

In retiring from public and representative offices the Congress leaders had acted hastily, hoping that the void created by them will have to be filled and that they would be called back with enhanced prestige. This was a miscalculation and they soon began to feel the effects of the stalemate. They detected the germs of settlement in a speech made by the Viceroy in the Orient Club of Bombay in February, 1940, which revived hopes of the restoration of the suspended constitution in the provinces. Negotiators were alerted and got busy but the Viceroy was firm, being unwilling to oblige the Congress except on his own terms. The disconcerting refusal compelled the Congress to wear a more refined demeanour. Agreeing that nothing was more distasteful than creating situations for Britain at this of all junctures in history, Gandhi proposed a conference of the best Indians and the best Englishmen to go into the merits of the dispute between India and Britain. His benevolence towards the Muslim League was equally unambiguous: 'Mass action at this stage without communal unity is an invitation to civil war. So long as there is no workable agreement with the Muslim League, civil resistance must involve resistance against the League. No Congressman can be a party to it.' This statement has the appearance of a considered judgement. But the Mahatama completely abandoned this position after two years, furnishing Jinnah with some of his fatal arguments against himself.

While the olive branch was being held to the Muslim League, miscellaneous Muslim splinter groups like the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, Ahrars, and the Momins, who enjoyed Congress patronage and whose credit with the Muslim community was depleted, joined forces to promote the Azad Muslim Conference at Delhi as a united front against the League. The Conference supported the Congress demand for a constituent assembly and condemned the proposal for Partition. The warlike activities of these groups against the Muslim League made them suspect in Muslim eyes and it was generally believed that they received the sinews of war from the Congress.

In June 1940, under the threat of a Nazi invasion Britain stood isolated and friendless, while there was a good deal of panic in India particularly among the propertied classes. Gandhi continued to speak with caution: 'We should wait till the heat of the battle subsides and the future is clearer than it is, but other Congress politicians, renewed the demand for a national government. In this extremity, Britain shrewdly sensed that the soldier fighting in the field of battle was far more significant than the politician spitting fire round the street corner. The loyalty of the Indian army—and Muslim soldiery constituted a substantial proportion of its fighting force—was of first importance. It was, therefore, necessary to adopt a more understanding attitude towards Muslim India. On 8 August 1940, a fresh declaration of policy made by the India Secretary, Amery, in the House of Commons, said among other things that, 'No constitutional change, interim or final, will be undertaken by Parliament unless there has been antecedent agreement not only between the geographical units but also between the main social elements both as to the manner of framing the constitution and the contitution itself.'

The August offer, as it came to be known, was a plain statement to the effect that the Congress would not have the whole power. While Gandhi called it a profound mistake, Satyamurthi, a well-known Congressman from the South, observed that the only proof of Britain's good faith would lie in handing over the country to the Congress unconditionally. The president of the Hindu Mahasabha described the statement as too alarming for the Hindus but the Muslim League recorded satisfaction as the offer meant a considerable advance towards its own position. As the Allied military position grew worse in the succeedingmonths, the tone of Congress resolutions became proportionately violent. Suddenly, the Congress leaders began to talk of civil disobedience as the only hope and the only alternative. The Congress camp had again and again denied the intention of creating a commotion in the country or jeopardising the conduct of war. Though these declarations were too recent to be forgotton, ingenuity suggested the manner of evasion. The defiance of authority could be divested of the characteristics of an organized movement and take the form of a moral protest. India considered war to be ethically wrong but since she was not allowed to speak her mind, a carefully picked band of Gandhi's disciples launched the struggle which merely consisted in shouting anti-war slogans to vindicate the right of free speech. This struggle continued for a while, despite the apathy of the leaders as well as the

people. Ultimately, it was withdrawn but not before it had added some thirty thousand civil resisters, including numerous ex-Ministers, legis lators and other prominent party men, to the jail population. The officials viewed it as a flop, but this plan became the thin end of the wedge, clearing the way for a more determined move.

In 1941, the Viceroy was again wooing the major political parties, the Congress and the League, in order to secure their co-operation within the Government. But the Congress would not join without the assurance of complete control over it and the League would not brand itself with inferiority by accepting a position rejected by the Congress. The Viceregal tactics were clumsy, his shifts and vacillations alienating those whom he professed to propitiate. His credit was not enhanced when in the autumn of 1941 he constituted a National Defence Council, a body with a high-sounding name, but with little authority and no business to transact except to listen to such war reports as could be safely confided to its members.

The December of 1941 saw Japan and the United States ranged against each other in the war. The ruthless Japanese military machine won the greater part of the East and South-East Asia, and by the spring of 1942 Burma (which till 1936 had been part of India) was occupied and the Japanese forces stood at the gates of India. The political atmosphere deteriorated and with fantastic rumours afloat in the air a discontented India might fall to Japan like a ripe apple. When Britain felt the ground slipping from under her feet, she hurried a messenger of peace to India with the promise of independence after the war. This emissary, the renowned lawyer, Sir Stafford Cripps, was a personal friend of Nehru's and had enjoyed the hospitality of numerous Congress leaders. Sir Stafford Cripps carried a draft declaration, which as he said, was not subject to modification or alteration duly recognizing the Congress demands for Independence and a constituent assembly. A bare skeleton requiring a lot of filling in, in a general way, it agreed to India's elevation to the status of a Dominion on the cessation of hostilities, the drawing up of a constitution by a constituent assembly elected according to a given method and the enforcement by Britain of the constitution so framed. But other provisions of the document seemed to point to the possibility of partition. They vested the right of secession in the provinces and permitted non-acceding provinces to form a union of their own. The immediate future, however, was not very promising for in the meantime India was to be governed by a composite (a priminarily Congress-League) cabinet within the existing constitution leaving uneffected the control and direction of the war.

The Cripps' plan proved unacceptable both to the Congress and the League, though for entirely different reasons. Nehru called it belated and depressing and said that the principle of self-determination was unduly circumscribed. Gandhi was shocked at the 'criminal' and 'sinful' prospect of partition. The Muslim League demurred because the constituent assembly elected by proportional representation would start with a preference for an all-India union. Its decisions would be taken by a majority vote and the rules of procedure would not avail

against numerical preponderance. Moreover, the partition of the subcontinent, which the League demanded here and now, had been relegated to the realm of contingencies. Yet Cripps continued to negotiate. At one time, his differences with the Congress, says Nehru, were narrowed down and agreement was within sight, but the failure was sudden. How it came about is not certain. The Congress blamed the Viceroy and the senior bureaucrats but this does not stand to reason. Unless the Congress had obtained some secret commitment from Cripps—later he was duly accused of perfidy—modifying the plan in its own favour, prolonged sittings were pointless. It was safer to find fault with the Viceroy because the indictment could be readily marketed abroad. It is probable that the Congress rejection of Crips' proposals was inspired by Gandhi for it was freely talked about in the Congress conclaves that the Mahatama was convinced of the imminence of British defeat and of the folly of negotiating with her representative. He had no mind to receive, as he put it, a 'post-dated cheque on a bank which was about to crash'. It is also a fact that Cripps ignored all other parties and talked with the Congress over their heads.

6

SHORTLY after Cripps' departure Gandhi decided to take a dip in the world-wide storm and began to prepare for a giganic action, giving out the plan gradually. It is difficult to follow the day-to-day meanderings of a highly subtle mind. All that we can do is to review the essentials of the perfected scheme.

To begin with, Gandhi deprecated all current imputations to the effect that the Congress was running after power. Some time earlier, the Congress leaders had solemnly informed Sir Stafford Cripps that they wanted nothing beyond restoring power and freedom to the people of India 'as a whole'. The opinion abroad, particularly on the other side of the Atlantic, was fed on such exaggerated reports that the Congress would even see the country handed over to the Muslims if this could throw the British out of the land. It is difficult to reconcile these renunciations with the remarks of the General Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee, made to an anonymous writer for the *Fortnightly Review* (August 1941), 'We want independence so as to be able to fight our quarrels with Muslims.' Gandhi was indifferent to the cost of the operation, considering no price too high to pay. He said:

> I don't want rioting as a direct result. If in spite of all precautions rioting does take place it cannot be helped . . . . .
>
> If there is complete lawlessness as a result I would risk it.[13]

Again, despite its grim potentialities, the movement was to be non-violent. Eversince the term non-violence had become a part of the Congress jargon, its use had become formal and mechanical. It was customary with Congressmen to condone murders and dacoities that went along with Congress campaigns on the ground that these were

never intended by the leader. But the original doctrine acquired a new emphasis and Gandhi's own words explain the latest construction:

> If a man fights with his sword single-handed a horde of dacoits armed to the teeth, I should say he is fighting non-violently. Haven't I said to our women that, if in defence of their honour they use their nails and teeth and even a dagger, I should regard their conduct as non-violent. She does not know the distinction between *Himsa* and *Ahimsa.* She acts spontaneously. Supposing a mouse fighting a cat tried to resist the cat with his sharp teeth, would you call that mouse violent ? In the same way, for the Poles to stand bravely against the German hordes vastly superior in numbers, military equipment and strength, was almost non-violent.[14]

Paraphrased, it would mean that violence when employed against superior odds *ipso facto* becomes non-violence. In the same context Gandhi admitted change of faith:

> I waited and waited until the country should develop the non-violent strength necessary to throw off the foreign yoke. But my attitude has now undergone a change. I feel that I cannot afford to wait. If I continue to wait, I might have to wait till doomsday. For the preparation that I have prayed and worked for may never come, and in the meantime I may be enveloped and overwhelmed by the flames that threaten all of us. That is why I have decided that even at certain risks which are obviously involved I must ask the people to resist slavery.[15]

This fairly illustrates the conclusion offered by a recent sympathetic biographer that Gandhi's principles evolved in response to his needs.[16]

The proposed movement was to be carried to its logical conclusion. The temper in which the Mahatama entered upon it can be inferred from a few observations chosen from his writings, 'It will include all that a mass movement can include', 'My intention is to make it as short and as swift as possible', 'I shall not hesitate to go to the extremest limit', 'Every risk must be run. We shall do or die' and 'It is going to be an open rebellion.'[17] How this was to be achieved was laid down in a Congress manual which called for the removal of railway tracks, cutting of telegraph and telephone wires and bringing all other communications to a standstill.

The expedition began when Gandhi advised Britain to leave India to God and quit the country, arguing that the British withdrawal, was necessary for India's preservation. Japan was fighting Britain and planned to invade India in pursuance of the struggle for supremacy, and if Britain left voluntarily the bait would be removed making it unnecessary for Japan to make a battleground of the country. Whether the demanded withdrawal could stay the projected invasion is open to doubt but many thought that it amounted to passive participation in the Axis objectives. Meeting at Bombay on 8 August 1942, the Congress executive endorsed Gandhi's ideas and embodied them in the now celebrated 'quit India' resolution which demanded immediate

end of British rule in India, sanctioning a mass struggle on the largest posssble scale.

The Government acted speedily, arresting Gandhi and other Congress leaders on the morning of 9 August. This was followed by a round-up of important Congressmen throughout the country, the total number of arrests not exceeding a few hundred. But they let loose unbridled mob violence. The outbreaks, which were organized, began simultaneously in widely separated areas. Explosive mechanisms were widely used, causing colossal damage. They could not have been executed without special implements and a great deal of previous preparation. It is significant that industrial machinery, even when it was fully employed on Government work, escaped serious injury, probably because it was expected to be taken over after the successful insurrection. Whole districts remained isolated for weeks, while jail mutinies occurred in some provinces. Gradually terrorism entered into the fight, Government treasuries were attacked and public records burnt. Parallel governments were formed by small village communities, while non-rent and no-tax campaigns cut off public revenues, undermining confidence in the currency. It took the Govrenment several months to put down the disturbances and to come back into its own.

The Muslim community had its reasons for standing aloof. Jinnah, characterizing the 'quit India' demand as fantastic, only having the object, of coercing Britain into leaving thee minorities to their fate, gave a new slogan 'divide and quit'.

Two years later when Gandhi was released, he accused the Government for all that had taken place, challenging the Viceroy to prove the innocence of his Government. The Viceroy ignored the challenge but demanded an admission of guilt and appropriate amends. This brought about another stalemate which lasted till the early days of 1945. V.P. Menon, a high Hindu authority, has contended that the League fully exploited the opportunity provided by the absence of the Congress from the political scene, taking all the provinces which Jinnah claimed for Pakistan under its wings. This accusation is not exactly true for the Muslim League organization was less strong than it appeared to be. Opportunism had sneaked into its hierarchy and the men who ruled in its name were distant from the masses who were prepared to run many risks for the League cause. The Unionists of the Punjab were a liability rather than an asset for they had joined the League only for tactical reasons. In 1944, their leader refusing Jinnah's demand to line up with the League to form a Muslim League coalition, he walked out of the League with a large number of his followers. The short-lived Muslim League ministry of Bengal was harassed by the hostile Calcutta Press and a catastrophic famine, while the weak-kneed League government in the North-West Frontier Province was handicapped by an irresolute leadership. The dramatic quality of party strife in Sind entirely rested on mercenary motives, selfish ends and sordid deals.

7

WHILE most of the influential Congress leaders were in prison after

1942, Viceroy Wavell often insisted that the Congress would have to swallow its 'quit India' resolution before it could be allowed to get back to power. But as the year 1944 wore on, his mind began to move in a different direction and with the end of the war within sight, he was preparing to face the political question that would be inevitably reopened after the termination of hostilities. On the advice of provincial Governors, he took the initiative in addressing a communication to his superiors in London outlining certain practical measures for pacifying the Congress without alienating the League. Whitehall was responsive but desired fuller information. The Viceroy paid a hurried visit to London with a set of proposals reported to have found favour with two prominent members of the central legislature, a Congressite and a Leaguer. He obtained Cabinet support for his plans and came back to India in June 1945, where he summoned a representative conference of Indian parties—important Congress leaders gaoled in 1942 were released to join the conference at Simla to consider his move for the remaking of the Central government on the basis of parity between the Hindus and the Muslims. The absence of common ground between the Congress and the League wrecked the conference. The Congress would not part with the 'guardianship' of the low-caste Hindus. Regardless of the fact that the League had grown in dimensions and influence, the Congress still professed to speak for what it called the entire 'Indian nation'. The Muslim League would not have anything to do with the Government except on terms of equality with the Congress and would have the entire Muslim personnel of the Government chosen by itself. The only outcome of the conference was a decision to hold a general election, a demand originally made by the League but later supported by other parties.

Meanwhile the withdrawal of the Labour Party from the war-time coalition in Britain forced the Tories to face the electorate sooner than they had intended or desired. The general election resulted in a Labour victory. The Indian provincial elections that followed in the spring of 1946 were fought on the issue of 'Partition' expressing the Muslim enthusiasm for a separate state. The League captured an overwhelming majority of seats everywhere except in the North-West Frontier Province, while the Hindu electorate threw up equally solid majorities for the Congress, weeding out all other parties. The Congress leaders still castigated the League as reactionary and medieval, deploring the reverses of nationalist Muslims. Nehru did not accept the elections as decisive, complaining that the Muslims, swayed by a religious hysteria, did not know what they were voting for. From the results of elections, Partition seemed inevitable.

In forming ministries, the Congress followed the precedent it had established in 1937. In order to strengthen the anti-League front in the Punjab (where the Muslim League party constituted the largest single group in the legislature and included over eighty-five per cent of Muslim legislators), the Congress entered into a coalition with a handful of Unionists who had survived the electoral landslide. Muslim League ministries took office in Bengal and Sind, but the North West Frontier Province had a Congress ministry. While the elections were

in progress, the British Labour Government decided to send a mission composed of Cabinet Ministers to negotiate with leaders and resolve the Indian tangle. The Prime Minister's announcement of this unprecedented step was accompanied by observations to the effect that no minority would be allowed to veto the advance of the majority. It will be remembered that in 1940 the minorities had been referred to as important elements in the national life of India without whose consent no constituion could be enforced in the country. The position was now reversed. Nehru sniffed a pleasant change in the words of the Prime Minister. They had the opposite effect on the Muslims. Jinnah maintained that the Muslims were not a minority but a nation and stated that the Mission could not expect co-operation from the Muslim League if it came merely to bolster up Indian unity.

The members of the Mission arrived towards the end of March 1946. Their declared object was to secure agreement on a form of government that could at once secure the essence of the Muslim League demand and maintain the unity of India. They ruled out the demand for a full and complete Pakistan comprising the five provinces of the Punjab, the NorthWest Frontier Province, Sind, Bengal and Assam in their integrity, arguing that the Muslim League could not hope to receive the whole of the territory it wanted, which included solid patches inhabited by non-Muslims. But if it must have a sovereign state, it must prepare to surrender large slices of non-Muslim territories in the Muslim provinces. Starting from this proposition, the Mission came out with a set of broad principles for a three-tier federation. The provinces would stand at the base and form the primary tier of the federation. Groups of provinces would occupy the intermediate position. The first group (A) would consist of six Hindu provinces and that the two groups (B and C) were to comprise the Muslim majority provinces of the North-West and North-East. There would be an All-India union at the top controlling defence, communications and foreign affairs only. The actual distribution of powers between the authorities of the three tiers would be determined by a constituent assembly elected according to a prescribed procedure and acting within specified restrictions. This constitutional mechanism, the Mission hoped, would appease the Congress by retaining a single government for the country and satisfy the League demand for Muslim self-determination by making groups (and not provinces) the real centres of government. Both parties reacted differently. The Muslim League hoped to convert the two groups of Muslim provinces into an independent state within a decade by invoking the enabling provisions of the scheme. The Congress announced its intention of turning the constituent assembly into a sovereign body competent to sweep way the appointed limits to its authoity and begin by striking out the grouping plan. It also assumed that the interpretation of the constitution would, in the course of time, extend the powers of the central government far beyond those originally assigned, as had happened in America.

The second part of the Mission plan related to the setting up of a representative government at the centre to tide over the period of

transition. Without a sufficient appraisal of the difficulties involved, the Mission presented the two parts of the plan as an integrated whole. It left the parties free to accept or reject the plan *in toto* and promised to go ahead even if one of the parties refused compliance with either part. The League accepted the plan and satisfied the Mission's condition for entry into the Government, while the Congress played a waiting game deliberately evincing indifference. It accepted the constitution-making part of the Mission's plan but refused to come into the interim Government, burdening even this partial acceptance with numerous qualifications. Faced with an unexpected situation, the Mission decided to ignore the League offer of co-operation and declared the project of interim Government to have lapsed. By acquiescing into the Mission plan, Jinnah had virtually accepted a non-sovereign Pakistan and was prepared to compromise on fundamentals. The Muslim League registered its protest against the methods of the Mission and the intentions of the Congress leaders by withdrawing its acceptance of the plan and declaring for Direct Action. The Mission left the the country at the end of June, by which time the gap between the communities had widened and the constituent assembly (in which the Muslim League won all but five of the seats allotted to the Muslims) had been elected. The nationalist Muslim leader, Abul Kalam Azad, the Congress president at the time, has categorically blamed Jawaharlal Nehru for disrupting the unity of India by killing the Mission plan. He stated:

> Now happened one of the most unfortunate events which changed the course of history. On 10th July, Jawaharlal held a Press Conference in Bombay in which he made a statement which in normal circumstances might have passed unnoticed, but in the existing atmosphere of suspicion and hatred, set in train a most unfortunate series of consequences. Some Press representatives asked him whether with the passing of the Resolution by A.I.C.C. (All-India Congress Committee) the Congress had accepted the plan *in toto*, including the composition of the interim Government. Jawaharlal stated in reply that Congress would enter the Constituent Assembly 'completely unfettered by agreements and free to meet all situations as they arise.'
>
> Press representatives further asked if this meant that the Cabinet Mission Plan could be modified.
>
> Jawaharlal replied emphatically that Congress had agreed only to participate in the Constituent Assembly and regarded itself free to change or modify the Cabinet Mission Plan as it thought best.
>
> I must place on record that Jawaharlal's statement was wrong. It was not correct to say that Congress was free to modify the Plan as it pleased. We had in fact agreed that the central government would be federal. There would be the compulsory list of three central subjects while all other subjects remained in the provincial sphere. We had further agreed that there would be three Sections, viz. A, B and C in which the provinces will be grouped. These matters could not be changed unilaterally by Congress without the consent of other parties to the agreement.

The Muslim League had accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan, as this represented the utmost limit to which the British Government would go. In his speech to the League Council, Mr Jinnah had clearly stated that he recommended acceptance only because nothing better could be obtained.[18]

In the month of August, communal violence had touched a new record. Few big cities were immune from carnage. While there was ferocious rioting in Calcutta on the Direct Action day fixed by the League, a government headed by Nehru was hurriedly sworn into office on 2 September amidst universal manifestations of Muslim disapproval. One of the first acts of the Congress leaders in office was to re-emphasize that they were not bound by the Mission prescript, that they were uncommitted to anything except entering the Constituent Assembly and that they would not allow the constitution to be based on the grouping of provinces. If this happened, the decision-making power in the Constituent Assembly would pass on to mere numbers. The Viceroy knowing that this was not the intention of the Mission tried to persuade the Congress leaders that grouping was inseparable from the Constituent Assembly and would have to be honoured. He even declined to summon the Constituent Assembly unless the Congress leaders arrived at some understanding with the League. But the Congress offered to have the Mission plan judicially reviewed. Jinnah, reacting to this new proposal, briefly commented, 'Are we going to commence the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly with litigation and law suits in the Federal Court? Is this the spirit in which the future constitution can be framed affecting four hundred million people of this sub-continent?'

After a few weeks, the League joined the interim Government of its own right without so much as a semblance of an adjustment with its Congress partners in government. The Viceroy's hope that common responsibilities would bring some measure of understanding between the parties was soon blighted. The interim government had been formed in circumstances which shut out every possibility of success with the Muslim League refusing to accept Nehru's leadership or the doctrine of collective responsibility in principle or practice. On the other hand, the Congress accused the Leauge of behaving as the King's party and twice demanded the resignation of the Leaguers in the Government. The British Labour Government was making frantic efforts to keep the Congress in good humour and the Viceroy was trudging an indeterminate course between the pro-Congress proclivities of his political superiors at home and the gruelling realities of the situation in India. The Congress and its Labour friends would not forgive him for bringing the Muslim League into the Government without committing it to participation in the Constituent Assembly. Meanwhile, the acrimony about grouping continued unabated. The British Government watched silently and with every appearance of helplessness, expecting things to right themselves. After six months' reticence during which time both parties had built up positions from which they could not retreat, it informed a batch of Indian leaders

summoned to London that grouping was to be an integral part of the constitution.

When the year 1947 opened, the situation was ghastly. Administratively and militarily, the British position was untenable. In a statement made to the House of Commons on 20 February 1947, the Prime Minister announced the termination of Wavell's Viceroyalty and fixed June 1948 as the date of British withdrawal from India, even if the Hindus and the Muslims failed to come to an agreement over the future. Wavell's removal was virtual dismissal. The new Viceroy, Mountbatten, was instructed to make yet another effort to secure the consent of both parties to the Cabinet Mission plan, falling back on Partition only as the last resort. His arrival in New Delhi on 22 March was not public and ceremonial, contrary to usage. He did not enter through the Gateway of India as every Viceroy before him had done, but flew by a plane which landed at an airport outside New Delhi. He was the only Viceroy to have made a speech at the swearing-in ceremony.

Mountbatten inherited a formidable charge. The provinces of Bengal and Bihar had lately been through a blood bath, while the Punjab was in the throes of a gigantic communal convulsion with the Sikh minority in the Punjab preparing for a final fight. The interim government was ineffective, with its members falling out on every issue and invariably shouting at each other in every meeting.

In spite of all these handicaps Mountbatten made an advantageous start. Because of his royal background he was believed to be politically unattached. He had met Nehru in Malaya two years before, where the two had made a deep impression on each other, but his partisanship for the Hindus and the Congress was unknown. Lord Ismay, one of his intimate advisers, who feared Mountbatten's selection being received 'as a pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim League' appointment, was reassured at the support and welcome lavished by *Dawn*, the premier Muslim League journal, on the incomng Viceroy.[19] Mountbatten was allowed to supplement the normal Viceregal staff with a personal secretariat which became his 'kitchen cabinet.' The biggest single personal factor in Mountbatten's success, we are told, was V.P. Menon whom the Viceroy brought into the policy-making fold. This official, who had held the office of constitutional adviser to the head of the Government since 1942, combined a remarkable degree of administrative skill with political flair, and was the protege of the Congress leader, Vallabhbhai Patel. From a perusal of his own book, entitled *The Transfer of Power*, we find that the weight of Menon's opinion was systematically thrown against the League even before he was promoted by Mountbatten. Now he became a power behind the throne.

Campbell-Johnson, one of the kitchen cabinet and the author of *Mission with Mountbatten*, has given a vivid pen-portrait of his chief. He describes Mountbatten as a wonderful talker and a political thoroughbred with an unruffled temper. The Viceroy could threaten as well as cajole, bully as well as flatter. A diplomat to the marrow of his bones, he was accomplished in the art of political finesse.[20] His energy, industry and thoroughness were astounding. Social diplomacy, Camp-

bell-Johnson says, was the principal ingredient of his politics. Though he professed to transfer power in terms of the will of the people,[21] he regarded it as most undesirable to lay down a procedure for self-determination which might yield the wrong answer.[22] In other words, he could devise procedures to invest his personal policies with the appearance of popular decisions. On one occasion, he triumphantly declared 'Jinnah can negotiate with me but my decision goes.'[23] Never having been a politician Mountbatten was unhampered by limitations and responsibilities engendered by the restraining influences of an active public life. The Duchess of Windsor who met him in the thirties found him bubbling with ideas on every conceivable subject and full of novel recipes for every department of national life. The reader of the Duchess' story is left with the impression that the man would make a spectacular if ruthless use of power when it came to him. The Viceroy's early experience of civil administration was confined to such duties as fell to him during his naval command of the Mediterranean where he employed his great authority only to baffle and humiliate those who did not agree with him.

Even before Mountbatten arrived in India his task had been simplified. By demanding the partition of the Punjab and Bengal, the Congress conceded Partition by implication. The League would have no choice but to give in and resign itself to a 'truncated' or 'moth-eaten' Pakistan. A big Partition problem was the division of the defence forces. Mountbatten's incredible plea that the sub-continent might be divided without dividing its army would have left Pakistan without the means to defend itself. Other details about Partition were settled at great speed, and the Viceroy left for London to lay 'the heads of agreement' before the Cabinet and was back in India on the first of June fully armed with Cabinet authority. The final decision was taken at a leaders' conference held at the Viceroy's house in which Mountbatten did most of the talking. On the next day, Mountbatten read a prepared statement on the All-India Radio outlining a procedure for Partition and the transfer of power to the two successor states. The provinces of the Punjab and Bengal were to be divided if the representatives of their minority districts so desired. The electors of the Muslim North-West Frontier Province (under a Congress government) and the Muslim district of Sylhet (adjoining Bengal and forming part of Hindu Assam) were to express their preference for amalgamation with either state through a referendum. The Sind legislature was to reopen the issue and indicate its willingness or otherwise to join the new state. A similar decision was to be made by the Assembly of Elders in Baluchistan. If the Partition proposal survived all these snags, there were to be two constituent assemblies instead of one. Two boundary commissions would demarcate the boundaries between the two states 'on the basis of contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims' and 'other factors'. Expert bodies were to be set up to effect a distribution of the assets and liabilities of the central government between India and Pakistan.[24]

It was an ingenious plan which apparently threw the onus for the partition of the Punjab and Bengal on their own legislatures. Actually,

it gave over-riding powers to the non-Muslim minorities of the two provinces and could not fail to yield what Mountbatten would call the correct answer. The country was to be divided along with the provinces of the Punjab and Bengal. The recognition of Partition was indirect and circuitous. The Muslim League was made to pass through electoral ordeals to prove its title to every bit of territory that was allowed to be included in the new state. The proviso regarding the settlement of boundaries was obscure and left room for mischief which materialized duly. The phrase 'other factors' was left to the interpretation of the boundary commissions. It gave absolute discretion to the common chairman of the two boundary commissions, the British lawyer Sir Cyril (later Lord) Radcliffe, who became an arbiter of conflicting claims because of wide disagreement between his Hindu and Muslim colleagues. There are good reasons to believe that his award was political. It detached sizeable contiguous majority areas (the larger part of the district of Gurdaspur and the tehsils of Zira and Fazilka) of Muslims that rightfully belonged to West Pakistan and gifted them to India to give rise to a crop of strategic, political and frontier problems.

The Indian Independence Bill was rushed through Parliament while a number of committees were feverishly working out the administrative consequences of Partition. It received the Royal assent on 18 July, carving two independent Dominions, to be known as India and Pakistan, out of the Indian sub-continent. The King was to be represented in each one of them by a Governor-General, but both Dominions were free to have a common Governor-General. Till such time that the two countries could make their own constitutions, they were to be governed as nearly as possible by the Act of 1935 which was now purged of its restrictive and reactionary character. The two Constituent Assemblies were to act as legislatures for the time being.

Partition was carried out in haste, launching the two independent states in the middle of August. The division of a huge and complicated bureaucratic machine like the Government of India within ten weeks was a stupendous task, and the time limit proved treacherously brief for the smaller state. The result was not surprising. Outstanding differences which remained unresolved still continue to poison Indo-Pakistan relations. The methods and processes of Partition seriously discriminated against the weaker country. This would be clear from the words and deeds of some of the principal characters in this dramatic episode.

The British Prime Minister, Mr Clement (later Lord) Attlee, was never tired of proclaiming his abhorrence of Partition. He had categorically instructed Mountbatten to keep alive the Cabinet plan and the prospects of a united India, but when this was found impracticable, he did not consider it necessary to keep his disappointment to himself. Speaking on the second reading of the Indian Independence Bill, he said, 'This severance may not endure, and the two Dominions which we now propose to set up may in course of time come together again.' Some years later, in the course of a radio talk he firmly reiterated, 'I

never liked it.' Mountbatten was as much opposed to division as his Labour chief. His very first interview with Nehru has been described by Campbell-Johnson as 'illuminating', when the Viceroy accepted Nehru's views as frank and fair and his evaluation of events as substantially accurate. In this very meeting, he was indiscreet enough to open a discussion on Jinnah's personality.[25] He was also quick to detect a twinkle in the eye of Patel and later discovered him to be the embodiment of the gentle Hindu. Gandhi was thrilled by the tenderness and benevolence of the Viceroy. Coming out of the Viceregal audience he told a gathering of newsmen, 'The sole referee of what is or is not in the interests of India as a whole will be Mountbatten in his personal capacity.'[26] Mountbatten's relations with Jinnah were far from cordial. The author of *Mission* has showed his prejudice against the Muslim leader though he does pay grudging tribute to his steady nerve, to the magnetic quality of his personality and to an overpowering sense of leadership.[27] But on the whole Jinnah is seen as cold, reserved and haughty. After his very first meeting with Jinnah, the Viceroy exclaimed to one of his advisers, 'My God, he was cold. It took most of the interview to unfreeze him.'[28] Campbell-Johnson's account would show that Jinnah was incapable of cultivating the British *Satarap* as gracefully as the winning side had done.

When Jinnah refused to propose Mountbatten to the Governor-Generalship of Pakistan in addition to the Governor-Generalship of India which had already been offered to him, Mountbatten expressed exasperation, taking the affront as personal and unbearable. He had cherished the hope that both sides would press him to stay on as their joint Governor-General for some time after independence and an extraordinary clause had been written in the Independence Act to that effect. Mountbatten discussed this subject with his advisers again and again. Some extracts from Campbell-Johnson's diary illustrate this:

June 9 . . . . . but at the same time he (i.e. Mountbatten) has been pressing the advantage from Pakistan's point of view of a joint Governor-Generalship as the best guarantee of a fair physical transfer (of assets).[29]

June 10 . . . . . Dominion Status and joint Governor-Generalship was again the main theme of our staff meeting today. Jinnah makes no move and gives no sign.[30]

June 23 . . . . . Jinnah treats both subjects (i.e. joint Governor-Generalship one of them) with oracular reserve, and, with an exasperating skill, conceals his intentions, leaving Congress and Mountbatten to make a false move.[31]

June 25 . . . . . Mieville spoke to me in very strong terms about the delay over any decision on the Governor-General issue and considers it to be, apart from anything else, rank discourtesy on the part of Jinnah, who continues to play the role of Delphic oracle and deals in riddles.[32]

July 2 . . . . . At last Jinnah's verdict went in Jinnah's favour . . . . .

Jinnah has certainly maintained the element of suspense and surprise on the issue to the last moment.[33]

The founder of the state became the head of the state but Mountbatten thought that he had been treated shabbily. He had demanded the Governor-Generalship of Pakistan for supervising a fair Partition. Since this was not accepted the Viceroy decided that he was absolved of all responsibility in the transaction. In a furious and off-the-guard moment, he spoke his mind to the man who had thwarted him. We may refer to the relevant portion of the diary cited above:

> July 2 . . . . . When Mountbatten asked him frankly whether he realized what his decision would cost the new state of his creation, Jinnah candidly admitted that it could possibly cost several crores of rupees in assets . . . . .[34]

But later events were to show that Jinnah had not correctly computed the cost of his decision.

The clandestine undertakings leading to an unjust boundary line for Pakistan are still veiled in secrecy. Radcliffe's original award, less unfavourable to Pakistan, appears to have been changed under some mysterious influence. The following pieces of scattered information would appear to sustain this contention.

On 4 June 1947 Mountbatten addressed a Press conference at New Delhi in which a newspaper representative drew him into a discussion on the principles of territorial demarcation. Mountbatten replied by mentioning the case of the district of Gurdaspur in which the Muslim population exceeded that of non-Muslims only by one per cent and added that the whole of the district 'may not go to Pakistan.' When the issue was proposed to be placed before the high representatives of British and Indian judiciary it was constitutionally improper for Mountbatten to have made the suggestion that he did at his press conference. At the time, it looked like an innocent, casual and off-hand observation, but this was the central feature of the boundary award, so far as West Pakistan was concerned. Since he realized that such an award would be repudiated by the Muslims, Mountbatten got together the parties represented on the high-powered Partition Council on 24 July and prevailed upon them to sign a joint statement pledging acceptance of the Boundary Commission's award *whatever* form it might take. Campbell-Johnson has written that Mountbatten regarded it as a personal triumph and was greatly elated and excited over this coup. He did not 'frankly believe that either party really knew what it was signing.'[35]

A few weeks before his death in 1950, India's Deputy Prime Minister, Patel, declared in a public utterance at Calcutta that he and his Congress associates had agreed to partition the sub-continent on the express condition that India would be allowed to retain the city of Calcutta. But he said nothing about the other terms of the pact, nor did he name the contracting parties. The information on pre-partition discussions whenever it comes, will throw more light on the different

facts of this transaction. India and Pakistan began functioning as sovereign states from 15 August. But the decision of the Boundary Commissions was not disclosed till two days after. This delay gave rise to suspicion. Originally it was hoped that Radcliffe would complete his assignment by 10 August and submit his award for publication before 15 August. But according to Campbell-Johnson, the complete failure of Radcliffe's Hindu and Muslim colleagues to arrive at an agreement passed on the task of deciding the issue to the chairman of the Boundary Commissions. But this is hardly a convincing explanation. The complete absence of agreement between the Hindu and Muslim members of the Boundary Commissions was foreseen and could have been provided for. The actual reason for delay in the publication of the award is stated in the same book but in a different context. The announcement of the award was withheld for considered reasons. Mountbatten's views, as set down by Campbell-Johnson, were:

> If he could exercise some discretion he would much prefer to postpone its appearance until after the Independence Day celebration, feeling that the problem of its timing was really one of psychology, and that the controversy and grief that it was bound to arouse on both sides should not be allowed to mar Independence Day itself.[36]

In 1958, Din Mohammad, a Pakistani justice who sat on one of the two Boundary Commissions stated in the course of his evidence in a libel suit before the Lahore High Court:

> . . . . . So far as Ferozepur headworks were concerned, I had been assured by Sir Cyril Radcliffe that they would fall to the lot of West Punjab. Cyril Radcliffe had in fact awarded Ferozepur and some other areas to West Punjab but subsequently that award was altered to the prejudice of West Punjab and in order to explain this alteration he wrote an illogical paragraph in his award, which runs as follows:
>
> 'I have hesitated long over those not inconsiderable areas east of the Sutlej river and in the angle of the Beas and Sutlej rivers in which Muslim majorities are found.'
>
> The same paragraph further said, 'but on the whole I have come to the conclusion that it would be in the true interests of neither State to extend the territories of the West Punjab to a strip on the far side of the Sutlej and that there are factors such as the disruption of railway communications and water systems that ought in this instance to displace the primary claims of contiguous majorities.'[37]

On Radcliffe's own admission, he ignored 'the claims of contiguous majorities' in favour of 'other factors'.

More recently, Mohammad Munir recalled his association with Radcliffe on the Boundary Commission in the course of his address to the Lahore Bar a few days before he relinquished the office of Chief Justice of Pakistan and considered himself free to touch on subjects that he could not mention publicly during his tenure as a judge:

. . . . . The award of that Commission, which means the award of the President of the Commission, has been the subject of repeated controversy in the Press, but I never uttered a word about it though certain important matters were within my knowledge.

Today I have no hesitation in disclosing two facts in connection with it. First, it was clear (to us) from the very beginning of the discussion with Radcliffe that Gurdaspur was going to India . . . . . Second . . . . . I was told by Radcliffe in the most unequivocal terms that three tehsils of Ferozepur, probably Ferozepur, Zira and Fazilka, were coming to Pakistan, and that it was unnecessary for me to discuss this part of the case with him. I still remember the description of the terrain he gave me of these tehsils and the main reason for their transfer to Pakistan, ... a few days later (the Award transferred) . . . these tehsils . . . to India. Before the Commission dispersed we were guests at a lunch given by Radcliffe at the Service Club. On that occasion we decided to ask him whether he himself had taken a decision after reading the reports of, and discussing the matter with, the other Members. The reply was that he had to see the Governor-General (Lord Mountbatten) before he could say anything.[38]

Finally, Jawaharlal Nehru's homage paid to Mountbatten on the eve of the latter's departure from India could not have been meant to apply to a man who had acted as a neutral in the vital developments of 1947:

Earl Mountbatten has acted in India's interest as zealously as any Indian could have done. Lord Mountbatten has held India's honour high. When he left Indians would feel the same regret as when a brother went.[39]

It is clear that Mountbatten had understood India's good exactly as Congress leaders had understood it.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. This remarkable book was first published in 1847. Subsequent editions appeared in 1854, 1900 and 1904. It is a laborious survey of the historical monuments of Delhi and contains several tables of the Kings of Delhi (Queen Victoria being the 202nd in line), transcriptions, and ends with a brief history of the Urdu language. It was translated into French by an Orientalist and won for its author the membership of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.
2. Khan, Sayyid Ahmad, *The Bijnour Rebellion*, p. 1, The Mofussilite Press, Agra, 1858.
3. Khan, Sayyid Ahmad, *Majmu'a Lecture hai Honourable Doctor Sir Syed*, p. 236, Bilali Press, Sadhora, 1892,
4. Khan, Sayyid Ahmad, 'Risala Asbab-i-Baghawat-i-Hind', pp. 28-32, (printed as an appendix to *Hayat-i-Javid*, Nami Press, Cawnpore, 1901).
5. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-41.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 42-3 and 48.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
9. Graham, C.F.I., *Life and Work of Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan*, p. 54, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1909.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
11. Bruce, J.F., *A History of the University of the Panjab*, p. 76, C. and M.G. Press, Lahore, 1933.
12. Khan, Sayyid Ahmad, *Majmu'a Lecture hai Honourable Doctor Sir Syed*, *op. cit.*, pp. 197-8.
13. Hali, Altaf Hussain, *Hayat-i-Javid*, Part II, pp. 52-4, Nami Press, Cawnpore, 1901.
14. Graham, *Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan*, *op. cit.*, p. 220.
15. *Eminent Musalmans* (no author), p. 35, G.A. Natsan, Madras, n.d.
16. Graham, *Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan*, *op. cit.*, p. 378.
17. Khan, *Risala Asbab-i-Baghawat-i-Hind*, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
19. Some religious leaders had declared the war to be a *jihad* against the infidel.
20. Khan, Sayyid Ahmad, *Review of Hunter's 'Indian Musalmans'*, p. 47, Medical Hall Press, Benaras, 1872.
21. Hali, *Hayat-i-Javid*, *op. cit.*, Part II, pp. 49-51.
22. Khan, Sayyid Ahmad, *Akhiri Mazamin*, p. 33, Manzil-i-Naqshbandiyya, Lahore, 1898.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
24. Graham, *Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan*, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-7.
25. Khan, Sayyid Ahmad (Compiler), *Report of the Members of the Select Committee for the Better Diffusion and Advancement of Education among Mohammadans of India*, p. 50, Medical Hall Press, Benaras, 1892.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-14, 22-3.
30. Hunter, W.W., *The Indian Musalmans*, pp. 179-80, Trubner and Co., London, 1871.
31. Graham, *Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan*, *op. cit.*, p. 219.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
33. Mehdi Ali (d.1907), better known as Mohsin-ul-Mulk, was Secretary of the M.A.O. College from 1899-1907.
34. Mushtaq Hussain. (d.1917), better known as Waqar-ul-Mulk, worked as Secretary of the M.A.O. College from 1907 to 1913. He had fought the trustees bill tooth and nail but accepted the majority verdict loyally. He was the first important leader of the Aligarh school of politics to advocate a departure from Sayyid Ahmad's loyalist creed.
35. Altaf Hussain Hali. (d.1914) was Sayyid Ahmad's biographer and an eminent poet and critic.
36. Ahmad, Sayyid Tufail, *Ruh-i-Raushan Mustaqbil*, p. 21, Nizami Press, Badayun, 1946.
37. Zuberi, Mohammad Amin, *Tazkira Waqar*, pp. 196-7, Azizi Press, Agra, 1938.
38. Zuberi, Mohammad Amin *Tarikh-i-College*, MSS. Karachi.
39. Hali, *Hayat-i-Javid*, *op. cit.*, Part II, pp. 222-3.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
41. Graham, *Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan*, *op. cit.*, p. 115.
42. Masud, Ross (Ed.), *Khatut-i-Sir Sayyid*, pp. 321-2, Nizami Press, Badayun, 1924.
43. Zwemar, S.M., etc. (Eds.), *The Mohammadan World of Today*, p. 198, Fleming and Ranel Company, London, 1906.
44. Baljon, J.M.S., *The Reforms and Religious Ideas of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, p. 85, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1949.
45. Smith, W.C., *Modern Islam in India*, p.45, Minerva Bookshop, Lahore, 1943.
46. Cotton, Sir Henry, *New India*, p.231, Kegan Paul, London, 1907.
47. Nehru, Jawarharlal, *An Autobiography*, pp. 462-3, Bodley Head, London, 1936.
48. Cumming, Sir John (Ed.), *Political India* 1832-1932, p.32, O.U.P., London, 1932.
49. Swami Vivekananda (d. 1902) received a good English education, graduating from a Missionary College in Calcutta. A sceptic in youth, he renounced the world, spending six years as a recluse in the Himalayas. He founded the Rama Krishna Mission, which was an effective organization fighting social evils among the Hindus.
50. Farquhar, J.N., *Modern Religious Movements in India*, pp.202-205, Macmillan, New York, 1915.
51. Pal, Bipin Chandra, *The New Spirit*, pp. 40-41, Sinha Sarvadhikari, Calcutta, 1907.
52. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements*, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

53. Fuller, Sir Bampfylde, *Some Personal Experiences*, p. 56, Murray, London, 1930.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
55. Cotton, Sir Henry, *Indian and Home Memories*, p. 66, Fisher Unwin, London, 1911.
56. The story of the partition of Bengal is told in detail in Chapter 2.
57. Chintamani, C.Y., *Indian Politics since the Mutiny*, p. 81, Andhara University, Waltair, 1937.
58. Chirol, Sir Valentine, *Indian Unrest*, p. 42, Macmillan, London, 1910.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
60. Banerjea, Sir Surendranath, *A Nation in Making*, pp. 74-84, O.U.P., London, 1925.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
62. Khan, *Akhiri Mazamin*, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
63. Khan, Sayyid Ahmad, *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan on the Mohammadans and the National Congress*, pp. 8-9, Pioneer Press, Allahabad, 1888.
64. Cotton, *New India*, *op. cit.*, p. 175.
65. Ahmed, Sayyid Tufail, *Musalmanon Ka Raushan Mustaqbil*, Nizami Press, Badayun, 1939.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 283.
67. Ali, Sayyid Iqbal, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan Ka Safar Namah Punjab*, p. 13, Aligarh Institute Gazette Press, Aligarh, 1884.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
69. *Ibid.*, pp. 160-61.
70. *Ibid.*, pp. 159-60.
71. Ahmed, *Musalmanon Ka Raushan Mustaqbil*, *op. cit.*, pp. 291-2.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 288-312.
73. Khan, *Risala Asbab-i-Baghawat-i-Hind*, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-8.
74. Hali, *Hayat-i-Javid*, *op. cit.*, Part I, p. 140.
75. Masud, *Khutut-i-Sir Sayyid*, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-9.
76. Hertz, Frederick, *Nationality in History and Politics*, pp. 78 and 87, Kegan Paul, London, 1945.
77. Khan, *Majmu'a Lecture*, *op. cit.*, p. 130.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
79. Khan, Sayyid Ahmad, *Mukammal Majmu'a Lectures wa Speeches*, p. 51, Mustafai Press, Lahore, 1900.
80. Gilchrist, R.N., *Indian Nationality*, p. 56, Longmans, London, 1920.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. *The Quarterly Review*, Vol. 204, p. 570.
2. Fuller, *Some Personal Experiences*, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-5.
3. Banerjea, *A Nation in Making*, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

4. A good discussion of this subject will be found in Lovet Fraser, *India Under Curzon and After*, pp. 367-82, London, 1911.
5. Fuller, *Some Personal Experiences, op. cit.*, p. 126.
6. O'Donnel, C.J., *The Causes of the Present Discontent in India*, p. 68, T.F. Unwin, London, 1908.
7. Bahadur, Lal, *The Muslim League, its History, Activities and Achievements*, p. 56, Agra Book Store, Agra, 1954.
8. Khan, Sardar Ali, *India of Today*, p. 62, Bombay, Times Press, 1908.
9. Banerjea, *A Nation in Making, op. cit.*, p. 189.
10. *The Times*, London, Weekly Edition, 1906, p. 206.
11. Swadeshi literally means 'of one's own country'. The word came to be used for articles manufactured and produced in India.
12. Banerjea, *A Nation in Making, op. cit.*, pp. 196-9.
13. *The Times*, London, Weekly Edition, 8 September, 1905.
14. Fraser, *India Under Curzon and After, op. cit.*, p. 388.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 389.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 389.
17. *The Times*, London, Weekly Edition, 1910, p. 588.
18. *The Times*, London, Weekly Edition, 1907, p. 306.
19. Khan, *India of Today, op. cit.*, p. 87.
20. *The Times*, London, Weekly Edition, 1907, p. 690.
21. *The Times*, London, Weekly Edition, 12 March 1909, p. 162.
22. Chaudhari, Nirad C., *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, p. 237, London, 1951.
23. Zuberi, *Tazkira Waqar, op. cit.*, pp. 169-70.
24. Chaudhari, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian, op. cit.*, p. 230.
25. Nehru, *An Autobiography, op. cit.*, p. 22.
26. *The Nineteenth Century and After*, Vol. 65, London, 1909, pp. 189-90.
27. Fuller, *Some Personal Experiences, op. cit.*, pp. 140-41.
28. O'Donnel, *The Causes of the Present Discontent in India, op. cit.*, pp. 84-5.
29. Fuller, *Some Personal Experiences, op. cit.*, pp. 133-4.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 139-42.
32. Fraser, *India under Curzon, op. cit.*, p. 384.
33. Mitra, S. M., *Indian Problems*, p. 72, Murray, London, 1908.
34. *The Times*, Weekly Edition, London, 1910, p. 1021.
35. Hardie, Keir, *India: Impressions and Suggestions*, p. ix.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
37. *The Times*, Weekly Edition, London, 1907, p. 626.
38. *Ibid.*, 1908, p. 250.
39. *Ibid.*, 1 January, 1908, p. iv.
40. *The Nineteenth Century and After*, Vol. 74, 1913, p. 1187.
41. Minto, Countess Mary, *India: Minto and Morley*, pp. 3 and 209; Macmillan, London, 1934.
42. *The Times*, Weekly Edition, London, 1907, p. 614.
43. *Ibid.*, 1908, p. 778.
44. *Ibid.*, 1908, p. 809.
45. Minto, *India: Minto and Morley, op. cit.*, pp. 31, 150 and 416.

46. Iqbal, Afzal (Ed.), *Select Writings and Speeches of Maulana Mohammad Ali*, pp. 12-13, Ashraf, Lahore, 1944.
47. The whole discussion is summed up in Miller, W., *Unrest and Education in India*, The Author, Edinburgh, 1911.
48. Aga Sultan Mohammad Shah (d. 1957), better known as the Aga Khan, inherited spiritual leadership of Ismaili Muslims at the age of eight. A colourful and many-sided personality, he was one of the leading figures in Indian Muslim politics from 1906 to 1935.
49. Khan, The Aga, *The Memoirs of the Aga Khan*, pp. 76-7, Cassell, London, 1954.
50. O'Donnel, C.J., *The Causes of the Present Discontent in India*, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
51. Ahmad, *Ruh-i-Raushan Mustaqbil*, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-9.
These passages have been retranslated from Urdu. The original letter is untraceable.
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APPENDIX A: BACKGROUND NOTES

Note 1. The earliest Muslim invaders of India were the Arabs, whose career as conquerors was short and whose dominion was confined to some parts of western India. Subsequent waves of Muslim invasions, primarily Turkish, came from the north-west in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The process of subjugation was quick but not thorough for countless Hindu rulers who submitted to the conquerors were allowed to retain their principalities on terms sometimes explicit but more often understood. Occasionally, the vassal princes proved helpful and dependable but frequently they waited for opportunities to throw off the Muslim yoke. On account of the frequency of dynastic and fratricidal struggles in the history of Muslim India, the Muslim empire was alternately shrinking and expanding. The last ruling Muslim dynasty, that of the Moguls was founded in 1526. It ruled the country with a strong hand till 1707 when Aurangzeb, the last of the great Moguls died. His death initiated a process of disintegration, though the Mogul rule nominally lasted up to 1857. Independent kingdoms were set up either by old ruling houses or by new adventurers. Still the fiction of Mogul sovereignty was kept up and the writ of the Mogul monarchy continued to run. The puppet emperors issued orders dictated to them by one party or the other.

The Muslim population in India, which had grown by the triple process of immigration, conversion and procreation, had numerous characteristics of a social group. After the disappearance of Mogul rule, the Muslims found themselves in a minority of one to five, unevenly distributed over the sub-continent. Religion was the symbol of their communal identity, and the educated among them tended to identify themselves with the political causes of Muslims living beyond the territorial limits of the country.

Note 2. The first British entry into the country was made by the East India Company in the first decade of the seventeenth century. But the growing political anarchy which followed the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, encouraged them to take to diplomacy and warfare. Starting from the south, they gradually extended their supremacy to the north. Their first remarkable success was achieved with the help of a Muslim noble, Mir Jaffar, in the Battle of Plassey (1757) which made the British masters of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Their victory in the Battle of Buxur in 1764 brought the Mogul Emperor Shah Alam under their protection. The rich provinces of northern India were conquered at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Sind and the Punjab were incorporated into the British Indian dominion in 1843 and 1849 respectively. Discontent with foreign rule led to the revolt of 1857 known as the Mutiny in which both sides fought with unsparing brutality. It was suppressed in 1858 but it left bitter memories on both sides. The rule of the Company was terminated and the country was directly taken over by the British Government in the same year.

Note 3. The system of administration established by Britain in India was simple. The supreme executive authority vested in the Governor-General (later called the Viceroy) who was assisted by a sort of a cabinet known as the Executive Council. The constitutionalist insists that the government of the country vested legally in the Governor-General-in-Council and not in the Governor-General alone. The membership of the Executive Council varied. By the Indian Councils Act of 1861 it started with a membership of five which was finally raised to fifteen. Each member of the Executive Council held office for five years. In 1909, for the first time, an Indian was appointed to the Council which combined executive and legislative functions. In 1853, the Governor-General's Executive Council was expanded for legislative purposes by the addition of some judges who were, however, soon replaced by non-officials, Indian and British, representing industrial, commercial and other interests (selected by the Governor-General). This body was generally known as the Imperial Legislative Council.

Administratively, the country was divided into provinces, six in 1858 and eleven in 1946. Each province was ruled by a Governor, Lieutenant-Governor or Chief Commissioner. The provinces, having executive and legislative organizations roughly similar to those of the central government, were divided into districts. Each district was, as it still remains, the unit of administration and was controlled by an official normally called the District Magistrate. The responsibility for the day-to-day administration rested with the Indian Civil Service to which, in the beginning, all appointments were made by nomination. But in 1853, the service was thrown open to a public competition held in London. The physical distance between India and Britain and the exacting academic requirements of the test had the effect of practically closing the Indian Civil Service to Indians. The demand for simultaneous examinations in India began to be heard as far back as the seventies of the last century, but was conceded only in 1921.

Apart from the provinces, three-eighths of India consisted of states governed by hereditary rulers of all communities, with varying degrees of independence. In the popular imagination, an Indian Prince was an extravagant libertine given to polo, elephants and dancing girls. The picture may have been true in many cases, but on the whole the Indian Princes averaged as high as the feudal lords of Germany or the Dukes and Earls of pre-Tudor England in ability and morals. The Princes could not communicate among themselves or with foreign governments except through the Viceroy. Every Prince was assisted by a British Resident who was appointed by and was responsible to the Viceroy, and who guided the policy and official acts of the ruler.

APPENDIX B : DEFINITIONS

Akhada. A physical culture club.
Ashram. A training centre or an abode of recluses in which the inmates practice the utmost simplicity of living.
Bhagwat Gita. A popular Hindu scripture.

Bureaucracy. A name collectively used for the British governing class in India; the Civil Service.

Civilian. A member of the Indian Civil Service.

Colonial form of self-government. The form of self-rule enjoyed by the more advanced British 'colonies' like Canada, Australia and New Zealand before World War I and demanded for India by Hindu leaders in the first two decades of the present century.

Communal. This adjective is not understood in the sub-continent in the sense in which it is ordinarily understood in the West. Its nearest equivalent would be 'sectional' or, more accurately, 'denominational'. Differences between the communities have been described as 'communal' according to the accepted usage of this sub-continent. These could be better described as intercommunal differences.

Communalist. An extreme advocate of the sectional interests of his own community, hence 'communalism'.

Community. The term community has been used in this book for religious and not territorial communities. Thus, the Muslim community means the Muslims of India and the Hindu community the Hindus of India.

Depressed classes. Low caste Hindus regarded as untouchables by 'caste Hindus'.

Dominion Status. The constitutional status to which the different 'colonies' were raised from time to time. The Dominions, as they came to be called, were sovereign states for all practical purposes.

Fatwa. An authoritative pronouncement on a social, religious or political question by the Muslim doctors of law (i.e. the *ulema*).

Government. The term is loosely used for the 'Bureaucracy' in the sub-continent.

Governor. Although Governors, Lieutenant-Governors and Chief Commissioners exercised identical powers in relation to their respective provinces, they occupied different status in the official hierarchy and received varying emoluments. The term Governor has been used in this work in a functional sense. It means the chief executive of a province, whether Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, or Chief Commissioner.

Hadis. The sayings of the Prophet of Islam.

Harems. The Holy places of Islam.

India. The words 'India' and 'sub-continent' have been generally used in this book for India as it stood before Partition (1947).

India Council. A group of advisers appointed to assist the India Secretary in the performance of his official duties. The members of this Council were usually chosen from amongst retired members of the Indian Civil Service. Indian opinion viewed this institution with suspicion as the Councillors were believed to be hardened bureaucrats with little sympathy for India. Membership of this body was thrown open to Indians for the first time in 1907.

India Office. The name given to the department of the India Secretary. It was organized in the same way as other departments of the British Government and was staffed with several hundred employees. The cost of running this establishment was wholly charged on the Indian revenues up to 1919. After that date, it was shared between the Governments of India and Britain.

India Secretary. Also known as the Secretary of State for India. A Minister of the British Government, the India Secretary was charged with the direction and control of Indian affairs and was the legal superior of the Governor-General or Viceroy. He was invariably a politician, whose personal knowledge of Indian affairs was often meagre.
Kalima. The Muslim profession of faith.
Lathi. A wooden club which can be used as a weapon.
Provinces. Up to 1919, the Indian provinces were of three types, namely Governors' provinces, Lieutenant-Governors' provinces and Chitf Commissioners' provinces, the classification being based on area, resources and the historical importance of each unit. After 1919, every head of province was designated Governor.
Reforms. The constitutional changes made in India from time to time, particularly those of 1909 and 1919. The administrative set-up of the country was not seriously affected by these changes, which were made at the top in response to vigorous demands from politically conscious classes.
Sanghtan. A movement seeking to strengthen Hinduism from within by reducing the friction among the numerous Hindu castes.
Shariat. The Muslim Law.
Shias, Sunnis. The two major sects among Muslims, who differ with each other in interpretation of some doctrines of Islam and certain events in the history of Islam. The vast majority of Indian Muslims subscribe to the Sunni interpretation of the faith.
Shuddhi. Literally means 'purification'. Hindu proselytism.
Tabligh. Propagation of the Muslim faith.
Tanzim. A Muslim movement aiming at the social and economic solidarity of the Muslim community.
Tehsil. An administrative sub-division of a district.
Weightage. The excess representation allowed to a minority in legislatures to which it would not be entitled on the basis of its population strength.
Whitehall. The London street in which the offices of the British Government are housed.

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